NEW IN CHESS

SPECIAL

Berlin Candidates 2018

Jan Timman names his favourite

Anish Giri: The strengths and weaknesses of the 8 Candidates

Annotated games by
Mamedyarov
Kramnik
So
Aronian
Caruana
Ding Liren
Grischuk
Karjakin

Vladimir Kramnik

Is he going to write history?

Download the New In Chess app:

- get early access to every issue
- follow every move on the built-in board

NEW IN CHESS
READ BY CLUB PLAYERS IN 116 COUNTRIES
Levon Aronian wins on the Rock
Garry Kasparov's Desert Island Discs
Judit Polgar How to recover from a loss (and a win)
Nigel Short Correspondence chess serves no purpose
Interview: Vidit Gujrathi India's rising star
Jan Timman The relevance of studies
Opening Surprise 2...h5 against the English
Maxim Dlugy on Fischer Random The future or just a variant?
Great games with great comments Anand, Giri, Kramnik, Mamedyarov, Karjakin and many more
Magnus Carlsen
Record 6th win in Wijk aan Zee
£15,000 PAYDAY FOR PIA CRAMLING IN GIBRALTAR

Read New In Chess on your tablet or smartphone, two weeks before the printed edition is available, and replay all the moves in the interactive chess viewer

You can now download the digital edition of New In Chess on your tablet or phone and read all the stories immediately after publication. By simply tapping on the games you can replay the moves on the interactive chessviewer. So from now on you don't need a board and set to fully enjoy what top grandmasters have to say about their games! The New In Chess app installs in seconds, has all the right features and is easy to operate. We have made an entire issue available as a FREE DOWNLOAD on your iPhone, iPad or Android device.

Get it on Google play

The chess magazine that moves

Now available on iPhone, iPad and Android

Available on the App Store

Warming up for Berlin

The chess calendar is crammed with great and enticing events these days, but there can be no doubt that the Candidates tournament in Berlin, from March 10-28, is one of the most anticipated and eagerly awaited highlights of the year. No matter who I spoke to in the past months – both mere enthusiasts and fanatical players – they all stressed how much they looked forward to the clash of giants in the German capital.

And Magnus Carlsen isn't even playing! But of course the Candidates tournament is all about Magnus Carlsen. Here the question will be answered who will earn the right to challenge the World Champion in London this November. There are eight Candidates and it is tempting and fun to speculate who is the favourite to come out on top in Berlin. Or, from a different perspective, who would have the best chances in the world title match against Carlsen.

With this digital special we hope to get you in the mood for 'Berlin'. Jan Timman looks at the history of the Candidates tournament and tells you who is his favourite to win and why.

For the lovers of data there are stats that may help you pick a favourite. Or if you already have a favourite and the statistics are against him, just remember that stats are no guarantees!

Or study the graphic on the peak rankings of the participants in this and the previous Candidates tournament. Some more data to crunch.

Finally, Anish Giri, perceptive and witty as always, assesses the chances of all eight Candidates by looking at their strengths and weaknesses.

His verdicts are followed by a recent game of all eight Candidates, annotated by themselves, as they appeared in New In Chess.

For those who are not yet familiar with our magazine app, let me point out that you can play through these games using the interactive chess viewer. Don't forget to try this option, as I am sure you will love it!

One of the reasons why I look forward to 'Berlin' is that no matter who will win, it will be a great story. Just imagine that Ding Liren wins and becomes the first Chinese player in history to play a World Championship match. Or that Fabiano Caruana or Wesley So make America proud. Or that Levon Aronian will finally make the dream of so many Armenians come true. Alexander Grischuk, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov or Sergey Karjakin, what fabulous stories that would be.

And just imagine that Vladimir Kramnik wins. That story would be hard to beat. If he qualifies for the World Championship match 18 years after he won the highest title by beating Garry Kasparov. Remember how close he was in the 2013 Candidates tournament when Carlsen needed the tiebreak rules to edge him out? Did you see Kramnik's six wins in Wijk aan Zee? Will he write history?

I hope that this special edition will give you a taste of New In Chess and that you will enjoy it. And if you're not a subscriber yet, you are more than welcome to join our readers from 116 countries around the world.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam
Editor-in-Chief

Candidates in Stats

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

FIDE Rating	World Ranking
2809	#2

Qualified by: Grand Prix

World Championship experience: 3 events

Career's best: 4th place Candidates

Score vs other Candidates: +1

Vladimir Kramnik

FIDE Rating	World Ranking
2800	#3

Qualified by: Wild Card

World Championship experience: 12 events

Career's best: World Champion

Score vs other Candidates: -4

Wesley So

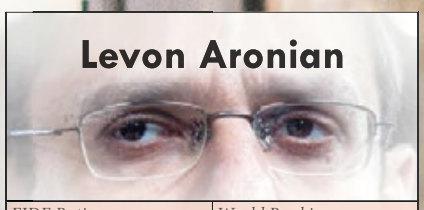
FIDE Rating	World Ranking
2799	#4

Qualified by: Rating

World Championship experience: 0 events

Career's best: -

Score vs other Candidates: -1



Levon Aronian

FIDE Rating	World Ranking
2794	#5

Qualified by: World Cup

World Championship experience: 7 events

Career's best: 4th place Candidates

Score vs other Candidates: +8

Fabiano Caruana

FIDE Rating	World Ranking
2784	#8

Qualified by: Rating

World Championship experience: 1 event

Career's best: 2nd place Candidates

Score vs other Candidates: +3

Ding Liren

FIDE Rating	World Ranking
2769	#11

Qualified by: World Cup

World Championship experience: 0 events

Career's best: -

Score vs other Candidates: +3

Alexander Grischuk

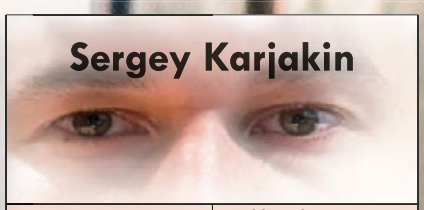
FIDE Rating	World Ranking
2767	#12

Qualified by: Grand Prix

World Championship experience: 6 events

Career's best: Finalist Candidates Matches

Score vs other Candidates: -3



Sergey Karjakin

FIDE Rating	World Ranking
2763	#13

Qualified by: Runner Up 2016

World Championship experience: 4 events

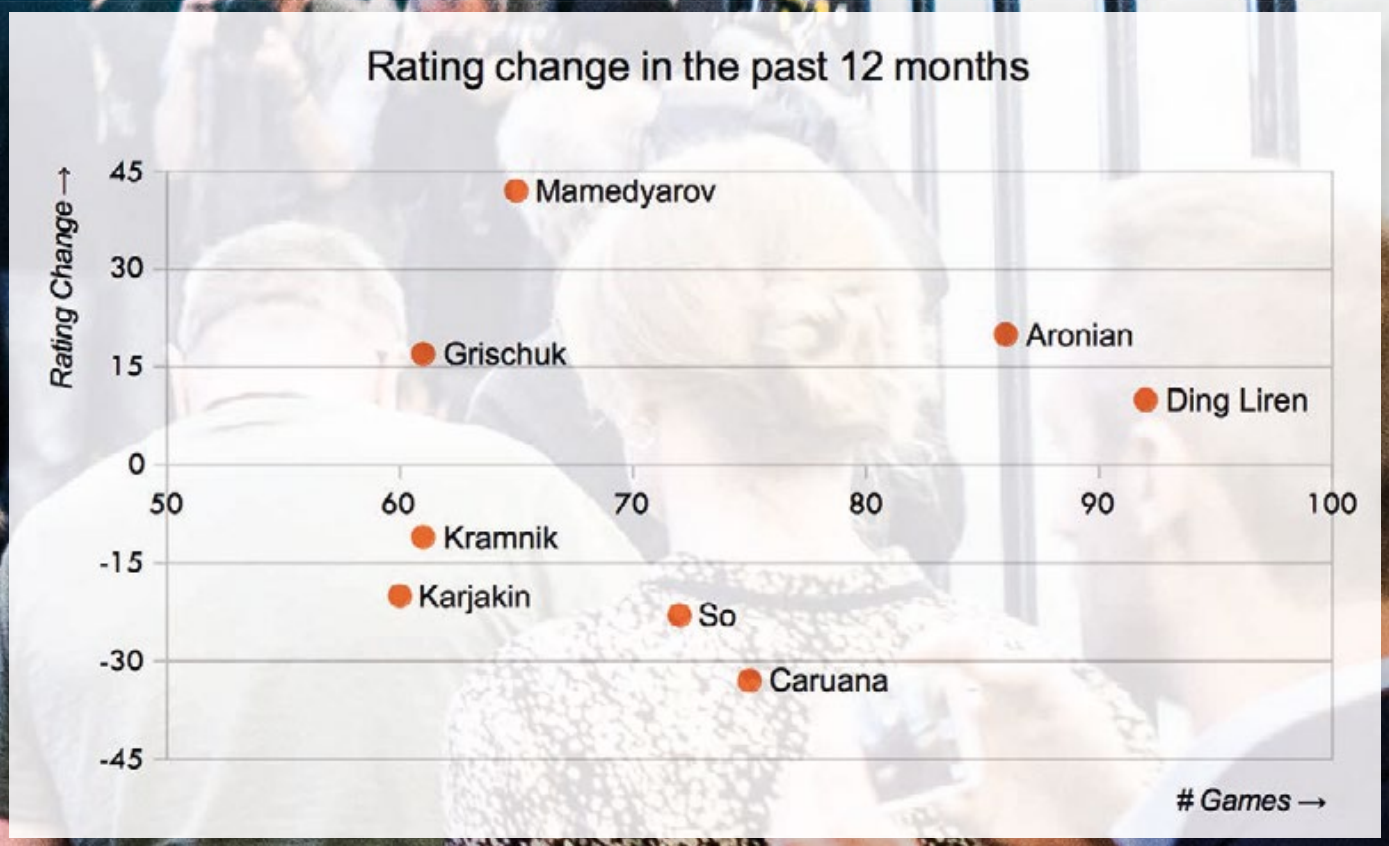
Career's best: Runner Up World Championship

Score vs other Candidates: -7

Candidates vs Candidates

(wins-losses-draws | score in %) data: chessgames.com

	Aronian	Caruana	Ding	Mamedyarov	So	Grischuk	Kramnk	Karjakin
Aronian		6-5-14 | 52%	0-3-8 | 36%	4-2-11 | 56%	3-1-6 | 60%	6-3-24 | 55%	4-7-27 | 46%	10-4-19 | 59%
Caruana	5-6-14 | 48%		2-0-1 | 83%	3-4-8 | 47%	2-2-14 | 50%	2-3-7 | 46%	5-3-11 | 55%	5-3-23 | 53%
Ding	3-0-8 | 64%	0-2-1 | 17%		0-0-2 | 50%	2-1-13 | 53%	0-0-4 | 50%	0-0-4 | 50%	1-0-1 | 75%
Mamedyarov	2-4-11 | 44%	4-3-8 | 53%	0-0-2 | 50%		1-0-3 | 63%	3-4-8 | 47%	3-3-10 | 50%	5-3-22 | 53%
So	1-3-6 | 40%	2-2-14 | 50%	1-2-13 | 47%	0-1-3 | 37%		1-0-0 | 100%	2-0-4 | 67%	1-1-12 | 50%
Grischuk	3-6-24 | 45%	3-2-7 | 54%	0-0-4 | 50%	4-3-8 | 53%	0-1-0 | 0%		1-2-13 | 47%	3-3-12 | 50%
Kramnik	7-4-27 | 54%	3-5-11 | 45%	0-0-4 | 50%	3-3-10 | 50%	0-2-4 | 33%	2-1-13 | 53%		1-5-12 | 39%
Karjakin	4-10-19 | 41%	3-5-23 | 47%	0-1-1 | 75%	3-5-22 | 47%	1-1-12 | 50%	3-3-12 | 50%	5-1-12 | 61%	



Jan Timman

Place your bets for Berlin

At the Candidates tournament in Berlin in March, eight players will fight for the right to challenge World Champion Magnus Carlsen for the world title in London eight months later. **JAN TIMMAN** looks at their chances and names his favourite.

For many years in post-war chess history, there was an established schedule to regulate the fight for the highest chess title. In the course of a three-year cycle, the would-be Challenger of the World Champion had to battle his way through three tests: the Zonal Tournament, the Interzonal Tournament and finally the Candidates Tournament. These were then followed by the 24-game World Championship match, twice as many games as these days. This schedule remained in force for five cycles, with only the format of the Candidates tournament subjected to change. Initially, in Budapest 1950, it took the form of a two-round tournament with 12 participants; later, in Bled-Zagreb-Belgrade 1959 and Curaçao 1962, it was a marathon tournament with eight players meeting one another four times: 28 games in total, also precisely twice the number of games in the present Candidates.

After the 1962 Curaçao tournament Fischer accused the Soviets of banding together against the rest, which led to FIDE replacing the Candidates tournament by matches. For a long time, no Candidates tournaments were held until, in 1985, a 16-player tournament in Montpellier was billed as such. However, the Montpellier event was followed by Candidates matches, meaning that 'Candidates tournament' was a misnomer, since the winner was not granted the status of challenger. So it's fair to say that the Candidates was only reinstated in its old glory half a century later, because in 2013, the 'new-style' Candidates Tournament was held in London.

Bull's eye

The Candidates tournament planned for Berlin this March will be the fourth one in this series and again attracts quite a wide interest. Almost everyone is interested to know who the new Challenger will be. In this regard, FIDE has scored a bull's eye. The qualification system leading up to the tournament, however, leaves much to be desired. First of all, the wildcard. This is obviously an attractive addition for the sponsor, but it also introduces an impurity in the system. Chess ought to be strong enough publicity-wise to obviate the need for such measures.

The two rating-based qualification places are justified – the Elo system is functioning well – but the names of the two players concerned should be made public earlier on; otherwise a number of players will not know what to aim for in the World Cup and the later stages of the Grand Prix. It would also be better to return to the format of one or two Interzonal tournaments, because the present system contains impurities. The World Cup organizers were understandably happy with World Champion Magnus Carlsen's surprising decision to take part, but it could have led to anomalous situations. Suppose that a 2750+ player had passed through the first five rounds with flying colours, only to tie 1-1 with Carlsen in the semi-final. If he were then to lose the ensuing tie-break, he would automatically be eliminated. I don't need to spell out to you how unjust that would have been.

The Grand Prix tournaments were also marred by impurities, especially because the participants only played in three of the four events. Grischuk, for example, who had not been included in the final tournament in Palma de Mallorca, had to play Giri as Black in the final round in Geneva, at which point he didn't have the foggiest idea of which result would serve him best. That depended entirely on how Radjabov and Vachier-Lagrave would fare in Palma. And these two were the only players whose qualification was at stake in that final Grand Prix tournament – a strange and unsatisfactory situation. Radjabov and Vachier-Lagrave hung in there till the final round, with the French champion

suffering the worst luck of all of them. He just fell short rating-wise, got eliminated by eventual winner Aronian in the tiebreaks of the World Cup semi-finals, and didn't get the wildcard, because that was given to Kramnik. His time will surely come.

Unique achievement

But it's a good thing that Kramnik is back, because he must be regarded as a strong contender. I don't think his playing strength has diminished significantly since his defeat of Kasparov 18 years ago. The only difference is that he suffers from weak moments more often, which may be due to age. But Kramnik isn't really old. At 42, Karpov swept the board in the top tournament of Linares in 1994, finishing 2½ points ahead of Kasparov and Shirov. Another example: when Anand was two years older than Kramnik is now, he won the Candidates tournament. Kasparov, his predecessor, stopped playing at the age of 41, but fortunately Kramnik has not followed in his footsteps, although he did say a few times that he would like to bring his career to a close at some point. If he were to win in Berlin, it would be a unique achievement: a former World Champion who becomes the Challenger again 18 years after winning his title. And in a match against Carlsen, he would not be the underdog.

The same thing goes for Aronian, who is my personal favourite. Aronian has an extremely fine sense for taking the initiative, so much so that you often wonder exactly how he did it. He can be sloppy in his finishing, but not when he is in top form. So far, Aronian has never managed to find that form in a Candidates tournament, but not, I think, because he is beset by a fear of failure. I see it more as a kind of tensing-up that prevents him from playing his normal style. My own experience has taught me that this handicap reduces in severity as one gets older. Aronian is in his mid-thirties. He can still grow stronger, especially because he was a slow developer amongst the top players. Playing in Berlin, the city where he lived for a long time, may also work to his advantage.

If he manages to control his nerves, Levon Aronian should be one of the top-favourites in the Candidates tournament in Berlin.

No outsiders

Caruana is another favourite, of course. He is a very systematic player. A consummate professional, he always tries to be as well prepared as possible. It was no coincidence that he took the lead in the recent London Classic by twice besting his opponent theoretically. Two years ago, he came within grasping distance of becoming the Challenger, but in the final two rounds he let his chances slip through his fingers. I do not doubt that he will try to make up for his failure this time. Just imagine that he succeeds in finding the same form as in St. Louis 2014, where he won his first seven games! He, too, would surely be able to hold his own against Carlsen.

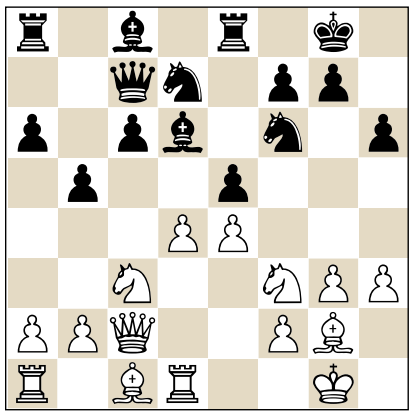
Karjakin I don't think will be amongst the favourites, but I said the same thing the last time, so I may be wrong. He did manage to put up a real challenge to Carlsen in their World Championship match in New York, after all. Karjakin can certainly not be written off. He has extensive theoretical knowledge, and is notoriously tenacious in bad positions. But I have noticed that he is more likely to lose his way when lured into unknown territory than other top players.

When it comes to it, there will be no outsiders in the Berlin tournament. In principle, everyone will be in with a chance. Grischuk, the third Russian participant, is a year younger than Aronian, but has vast experience as a top player. Grischuk is a strategist first and foremost. He has a fine sense for the requirements of the position, but he usually needs a lot of time to fathom the tactical possibilities, with the result that he often ends up in raging time-trouble. This obviously doesn't help, and the problem is that time-trouble is an addiction that is hard to get rid of.

'Aronian can still grow stronger, especially because he was a slow developer.'

The other three players are newcomers. To introduce them, I will present you with fragments from recent games from all three of them. Mamedyarov is five years older than Karjakin, but has not moved in the highest echelons for as long. In the Nutcrackers Battle of the Generations held in Moscow in December, he scored very well, propelling himself to third place in the world rankings. A fragment from that tournament:

Andrey Esipenko
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Moscow 2017

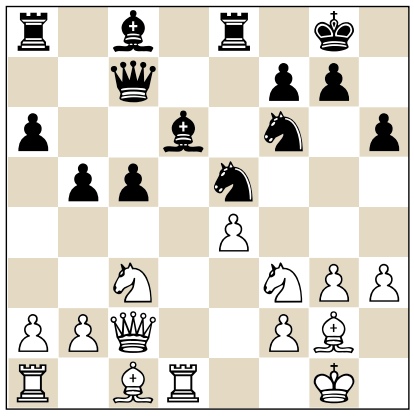


position after 15.h3

A position that has arisen out of the Slav. The 15-year-old White player has withdrawn his king's bishop from c4 and fianchettoed it. This is an interesting plan, which offers chances of an advantage. Mamedyarov now plays a sharp move.

15...c5 This advance is based on sharp calculation.

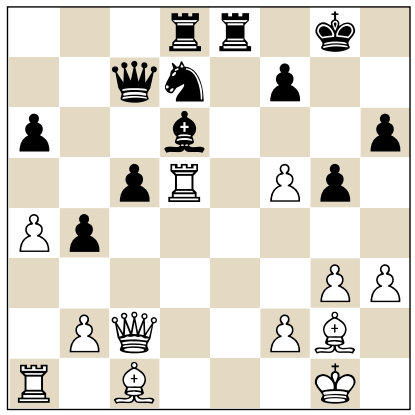
16.dxe5 ♘xe5



17.♘h4 Critical was 17.♘xe5 ♗xe5 18.♘e2, after which White is threatening to win a piece. With 18...c4! Black is able to generate just about enough counterplay. The main line goes as follows: 19.f4 ♗d6 20.e5 ♗c5+ 21.♔h2 ♗b7 22.♘c3 ♘d7 23.♘e4, and now 23...♖ad8! is the move with which Black maintains a dynamic balance.
The text is less effective.

17...g5!
Vintage Mamedyarov. He is going for the most active continuation, indicating that he is playing to win.
With 17...c4 he could have forced a draw. White has nothing better than 18.f4, after which 18...♗c5+ 19.♔h2 ♘eg4+ 20.hxg4 ♘xg4+ 21.♔h1 ♘f2+ leads to a draw by perpetual check.

18.♘f5 ♗xf5 19.exf5 ♖ad8 20.a4 b4 21.♘d5 ♘xd5 22.♖xd5 ♘d7
The alternative was 22...c4, intending to take the knight to d3, but the text is a sound practical choice, because it presents White with a difficult choice.



23.f6 A strategic pawn sacrifice that completely fails to do its job. He should have gone 23.♗e3, when it looks as if he will be in trouble because Black can take on g3 at some point. But this is not so terrible. Black has two knight moves:
A) 23...♘b6 24.♖dd1 ♗xg3 25.a5! ♘d7 26.♕c4, and White is slightly better because the black a-pawn is very weak;
B) 23...♘f6 24.♖dd1 ♗xg3 25.♕xc5, and the position is equal.

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Are you not yet a subscriber to New In Chess? Give it a try! Take out a subscription today on the premier chess magazine in the world, and receive 8 issues a year.
New In Chess Digital is available for iPhone, iPad and Android.

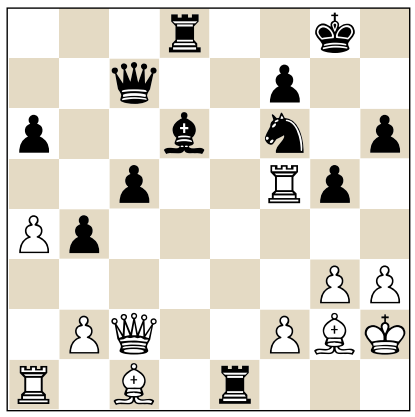
NEW IN CHESS		EUROPE	U.S.A. Canada Mexico	REST OF WORLD
1 year (8 issues)	print or digital	€79.99	$89.99	€79.99
1 years (8 issues)	print AND digital	€99.99	$113.99	€99.99
3 years (24 issues)	print or digital	€219.99	$239.99	€219.99
3 years (24 issues)	print AND digital	€279.99	$311.99	€279.99

SUBSCRIBE DIRECTLY AT WWW.NEWINCHESS.COM

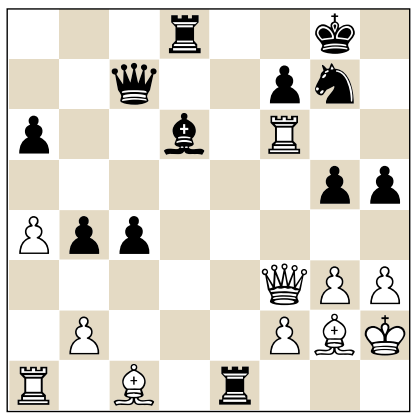
New In Chess, P.O. Box 1093, 1810 KB Alkmaar, The Netherlands.
Phone: 0031-(0)72 512 7137, nic@newinchess.com

USA and Canada only:
New In Chess c/o Land of Chess, 707 Skokie Blvd, Suite 600, Northbrook, IL 60062, Phone: 847-480-2780, nic@newinchess.com

23...♘xf6 24.♖f5 ♖e1+ 25.♔h2



25...♘h5! Now it's not White but Black that gets an attack.
26.♕b3 ♘g7 Good enough, but the computer regards 26...♖e2 27.♔g1 ♗xg3! as stronger.
27.♖f6 c4 28.♕f3 h5



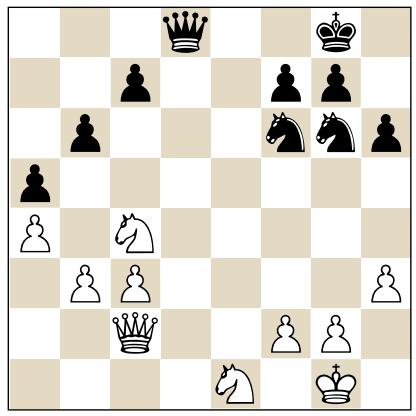
Winning. White will be unable to prevent the continued advance of the h-pawn. Mamedyarov provides us with an attractive finale.
29.♖h6 h4 30.♕g4 hxg3+ 31.fxg3 ♕c5 32.h4 ♗xg3+ 33.♕xg3 ♕g1+ 34.♔h3 ♖d3 35.♗f3 ♖xf3 36.♕xf3 g4+ 37.♕xg4 ♕h1+ 38.♔g3 ♖g1+ White resigned.

This fragment is a good illustration of Mamedyarov's aggressive style. He is an attractive player who is not afraid of taking risks. He seems to relish break-neck complications and usually manages to find his way through. In the past, Mamedyarov tended to be easily discouraged, often resigning too quickly, but this seems to have changed of late – and he does not lose very often. If he remains mentally strong, Mamedyarov has a good chance to finish high in the standings.

Strong technique

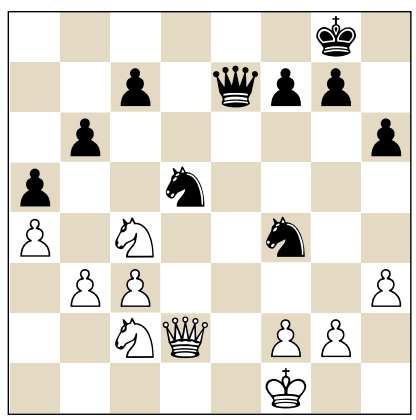
Wesley So just missed qualification in the previous cycle. Subsequent to this, he was untouchable in the sense that he had a long unbeaten run of 67 games of classical chess at top level. In the past year, his play suffered a slight decline. He is at his best in simple positions.

Vishy Anand
Wesley So
London 2017 (9)

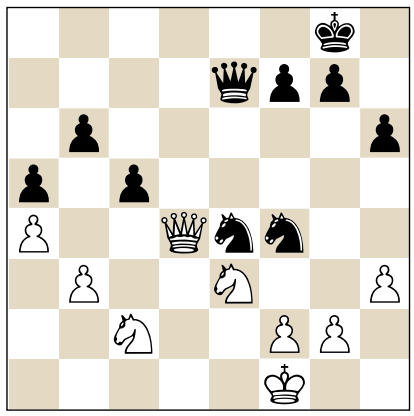


position after 23...♕xd8

Nothing much seems to be going on, but Black is still a tad better; his knight pair is more versatile.
24.♕d3 A tacit draw offer. But Black is not forced to swap the queens. 24.♘f3 would have been slightly more accurate.
24...♕e7 25.♘c2 ♘f4 26.♕d2 ♘6d5
So has positioned his knights for battle. White must be wary now.
27.♔f1
He doesn't see the danger. In the endgame, you tend to prefer to keep your king away from the edge of the board, but for tactical reasons 27.♔h2 would have been better here.



27...♘xc3! A strong knight offer that White cannot afford to accept. After 28.♕xc3 ♕e2+ 29.♔g1 ♕d1+ 30.♔h2 ♘e2 he would be mated.
28.♘4e3
Anand definitely didn't have his day. With the tactical counter-stroke 28.♘xb6! he could have restricted the damage. The point becomes clear after 28...cxb6 29.♕xc3 ♕e2+ 30.♔g1 ♕d1+ 31.♔h2 ♘e2 32.♕c8+ ♔h7 33.♕f5+, and White has perpetual check. Stronger is 30...♕e4! (instead of 30...♕d1+) – after 31.♘e3 ♘e2+ 32.♔f1 ♘d4 Black retains good winning chances.
28...♘e4
Now Black is a pawn ahead in a better position.
29.♕d4 c5



Forcing back the queen. The technical stage was not difficult for Black.
30.♕d1 ♕f6 31.♘g4 ♕c3 32.♘ce3 h5 33.♘h2 ♕b2
White resigned.

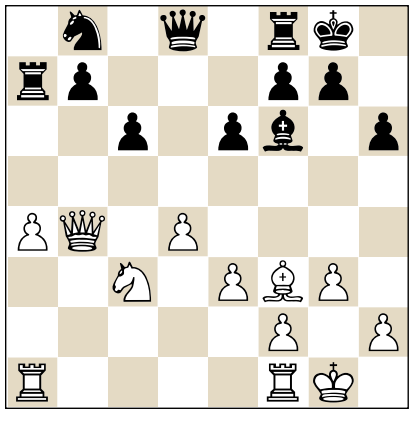
So is first and foremost a solid player who relies on his strong technique. He is a year younger than Caruana and has every possibility to develop further. At this point, I don't think he has the punching power to secure a large plus score.

First Chinese Candidate

Ding Liren is the first Chinese GM to qualify for the Candidates. He has an original playing style and his games are dotted with interesting ideas. I need only mention his fantastic game against Bai Jinshi published in New

In Chess 2017/8. At the same time, he can also play excellent technical games.

Ding Liren
Wang Hao
Tbilisi 2017 (4.2)



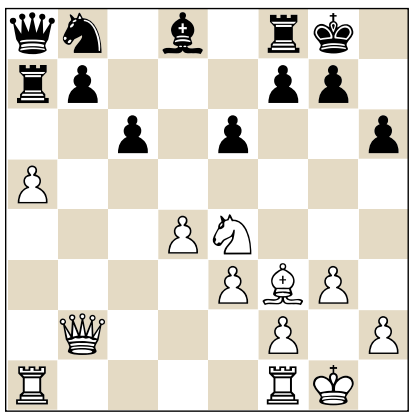
position after 16...♖a7

In the main line of the Catalan, White finds it hard to get an advantage. Ding Liren refuses to be discouraged by the opposite-coloured bishops and goes for a straightforward strategic plan.

17.a5!

With the eventual aim of swapping his a-pawn for the black b-pawn.

17...♘a6 18.♕b6 ♕a8 19.♘e4 ♗d8 20.♕b2 ♘b8



21.♘d6!

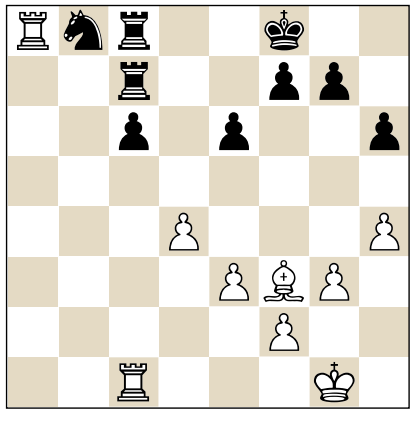
Now Black is more or less forced to take on a5, for otherwise White will take his knight to c4.

21...♗xa5 22.♘xb7 ♕xb7

Wang Hao decides to go for a strategically suspect endgame: he is stuck with a backward pawn and a passive knight.

The alternative was 22...♖xb7 23.♖xa5 ♕xa5 24.♕xb7 c5, after which White also gets a superior bishop after 25.d5 exd5 26.♗xd5 ♘a6 27.♗c4 ♘c7 28.♖d1, with a lasting advantage.

23.♕xb7 ♖xb7 24.♖xa5 ♖c8 25.♖c1 ♖bc7 26.♖a8 ♔f8 27.h4



The white pieces have taken up their optimal positions, and now Ding Liren starts increasing the pressure on the enemy position with pawn moves. The first one to advance is the h-pawn.

27...♔e7 28.h5 ♔d6 29.e4

And now the e-pawn.

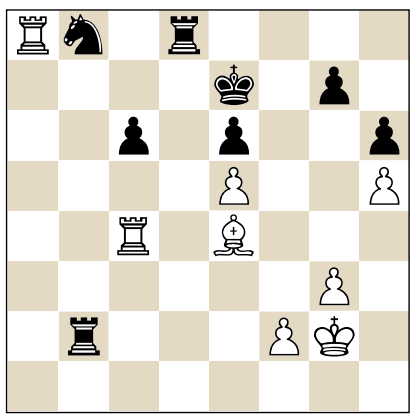
29...♔e7 30.e5 ♖d8 31.♔g2 ♖b7 32.♖c4 f6 33.♗e4!

Very systematic. The way for the f-pawn is cleared.

33...fxe5

It's hard to be sure, but it seems to me that this is the decisive error. White now gets a powerful majority on the kingside. Better was 33...♖b5.

34.dxe5 ♖b2



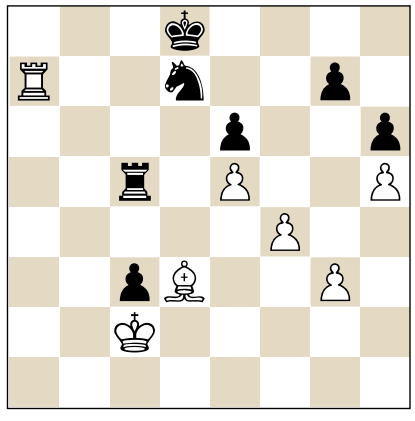
35.♗g6!

Wang Hao must have underestimated this plan.

35...♘d7 36.♖a7 ♖e2 37.♖e4

White has no objection against a rook swap; he is allowed to keep his more active one.

37...♖xe4 38.♗xe4 ♖c8 39.f4 ♔d8 40.♔f3 c5 41.♔e3 ♖c7 42.♖a8+ ♖c8 43.♖a6 ♔e7 44.♖a7 c4 45.♔d2 c3+ 46.♔c2 ♔d8 47.♗d3 ♖c5



48.♖a8+

For the second time, Ding Liren uses this manoeuvre to gain a tempo.

48...♔e7 49.♖a7 ♔d8 50.♖a3

Winning the c-pawn, after which the white kingside majority decides the issue.

50...♘b6 51.♖xc3 ♖xc3+ 52.♔xc3 ♘d5+ 53.♔d4 ♔e7 54.♗e4 ♘b4 55.♔c5 ♘a2 56.♔c4 ♘c1 57.♗d3

Black resigned.

Besides Caruana and So, Ding Liren is the third player younger than Carlsen. It will be interesting to see how he will develop from here. In Berlin, he will undoubtedly provide some surprises, although I don't foresee any serious possibility of him winning the tournament. Maybe next time.

The final score

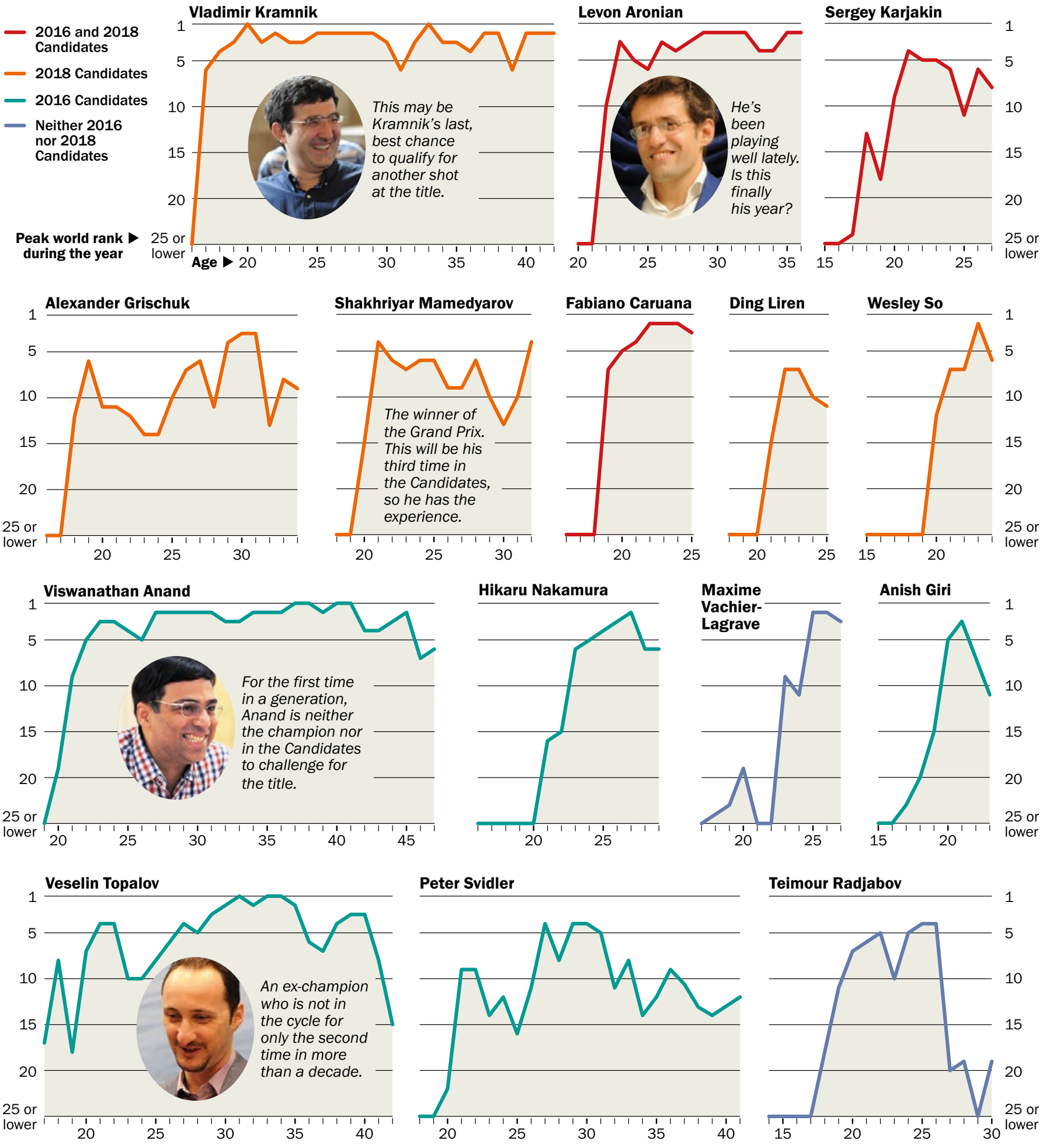
An interesting question is how many points the winner in Berlin will garner. Tal holds the absolute record as regards scores in Candidates tournaments. In 1959, he scored 20 out of 28 (16 wins and four losses)! Its equivalent in Berlin would be 10 out of 14. In the previous three editions, the winner invariably scored a relatively modest 8½ points. No player was ever in top form in any of the three tournaments. My prediction is that it will be different this time, and that the Challenger will get to nine points. ■

Peak Rankings of the Candidates, Then and Now

The field for the 2018 Candidates tournament is set, and by any measure, it is impressive. There is one ex-world champion (Vladimir Kramnik) and the players currently ranked Nos. 2, 3, and 4 in the world (Levon Aronian, Fabiano Caruana, and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, respectively). But how does the 2018 group stack up against the field from 2016? And what about the two players who fell short of qualifying on the final day of the Grand Prix (Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Teimour Radjabov)?

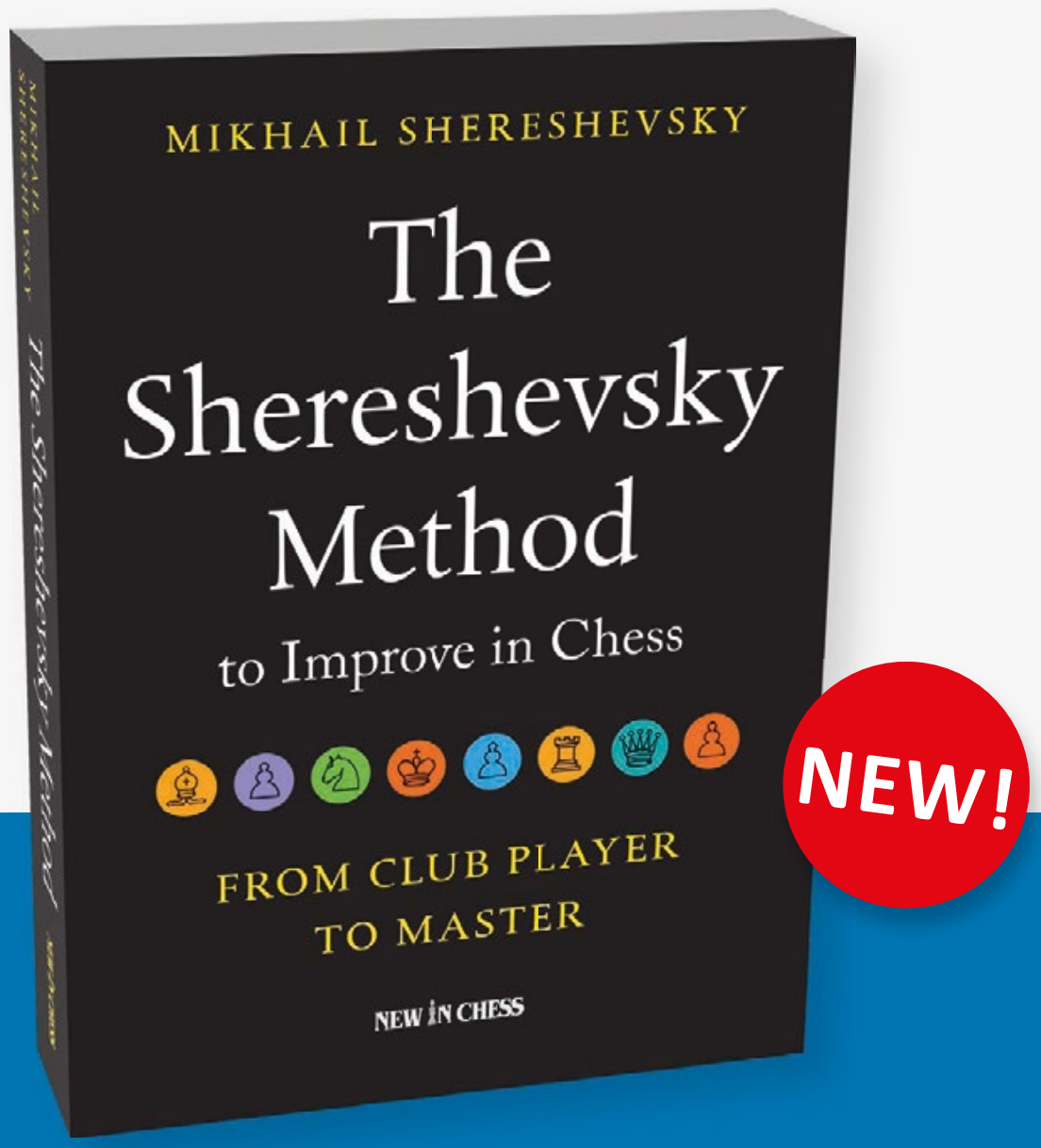
The graphic below looks at the peak rankings of all the players in the 2016 and 2018 Candidates, or who were in the running to be in next year's competition. Readers can judge who, if anyone, will be missed the most.

DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN


2016 and 2018 Candidates
2018 Candidates
2016 Candidates
Neither 2016 nor 2018 Candidates
Peak world rank during the year
1
5
10
15
20
25 or lower
Age
Vladimir Kramnik
This may be Kramnik's last, best chance to qualify for another shot at the title.
Levon Aronian
He's been playing well lately. Is this finally his year?
Sergey Karjakin
Alexander Grischuk
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
The winner of the Grand Prix. This will be his third time in the Candidates, so he has the experience.
Fabiano Caruana
Ding Liren
Wesley So
Viswanathan Anand
For the first time in a generation, Anand is neither the champion nor in the Candidates to challenge for the title.
Hikaru Nakamura
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Anish Giri
Veselin Topalov
An ex-champion who is not in the cycle for only the second time in more than a decade.
Peter Svidler
Teimour Radjabov

“New In Chess scored a bit of a coup getting this book.”

Mark Crowther, editor *The Week In Chess*



In 2014 the Russian Chess Federation started a wide-ranging campaign aimed at the revival of chess in Russia. One of the first actions that were taken was commissioning legendary Belarussian chess coach Mikhail Shereshevsky to recapitulate and condense his famous training methods.

In doing so Shereshevsky has created a totally reworked compendium of his acclaimed classics *Endgame Strategy* and *The Soviet Chess Conveyor*, with many improvements, new examples and exercises. Furthermore, he has added a new and highly effective approach on how to calculate variations.

This book offers a unique opportunity to improve your game with one of the supreme examples of Russian chess training excellence.

paperback | 352 pages | €27.95 | available at your local (chess)bookseller or at newinchess.com | a NEW IN CHESS publication

Why wouldn't *he* win?

The eight Candidates – their strengths and weaknesses

Predictions are often an expression of personal preferences, secret hopes or sometimes even plain chauvinism. But we love to hear what the experts have to say, to see if their views boost our hopes. To provide our readers with ammunition, no matter who they root for, we asked **ANISH GIRI** to give his take on the eight grandmasters that vie to become Magnus Carlsen's next challenger. The assessments of our contributing editor are followed by a recent game annotated by the player himself, as they appeared in the pages of New In Chess.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov

Azerbaijan – Age 32 – World ranking: 2 – Rating: 2809

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov cruised to the Candidates tournament with a very consistent performance in the Grand Prix, and overall too, he has been quite impressive in 2017. Still I don't quite understand what it is that has changed in the Azeri top player that would now suddenly turn him from an unstable 2750 player into the Challenger for the world title. His preparation should still be way below the level needed at the top and his lack

Strength: determination

Weakness: instability

of emotional stability will not go away overnight. His good period has lasted rather long and his confidence as well as his consistency are almost starting to feel genuine. Yet, I would be shocked to see him fighting for the first place. The Candidates tournament is a good test to show how real his 2800+ rating is or if it is a bubble that the other participants will gladly attempt to pop. But then again, maybe Bitcoin will be the future?

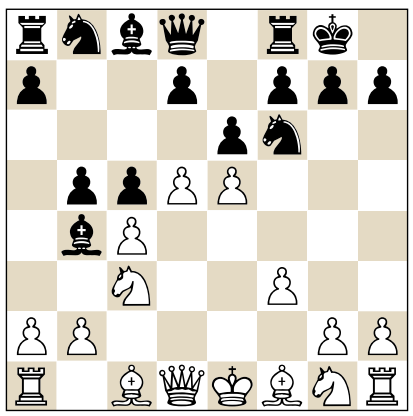
The following game was played in the Sharjah Grand Prix in the United Arab Emirates, where Mamedyarov shared first place with Alexander Grischuk and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Hou Yifan
Sharjah 2017 (9)
Nimzo-Indian, Kmoch Variation

Notes by ***Shakhriyar Mamedyarov***

This was a crucial game for me, because I felt that if I won this game, I would share 1st place. Fortunately, the opening went very well for me and I got a clear initiative.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.f3 c5 5.d5 0-0 6.e4 b5 7.e5

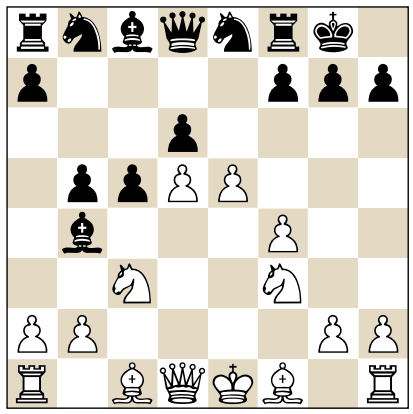


7...♘e8 Another theoretical position would arise after 7...exd5 8.exf6 d4 9.a3 ♗a5 10.b4 dxc3 11.bxa5, a line I analysed a lot with my team and prepared for the 2014 Candidates Tournament in Khanty-Mansiysk.

8.f4 d6

8...exd5 9.cxd5 d6 10.♘f3 transposes.

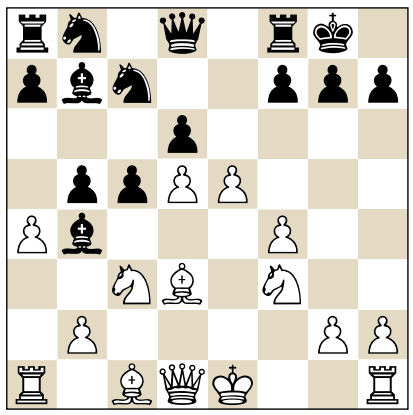
9.♘f3 exd5 10.cxd5



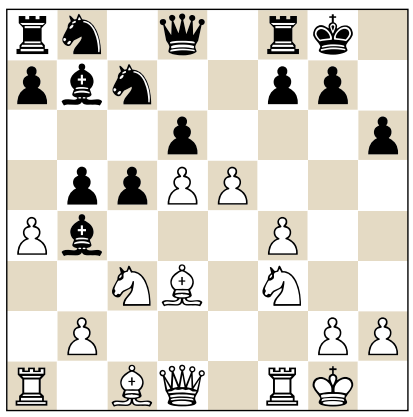
10...♘c7

In Khanty-Mansiysk, Karjakin chose 10...c4 against me. That game continued 11.a4 ♘d7 12.♗e2 ♕b6 13.axb5 ♘c7 14.♕d4 ♗b7 15.♗d2 ♗xc3 16.bxc3 dxe5 17.fxe5 ♗xd5 18.♗e3 ♕xb5 19.0-0 ♘e6 20.♕h4 and ended in a draw on move 60 after a lively fight.

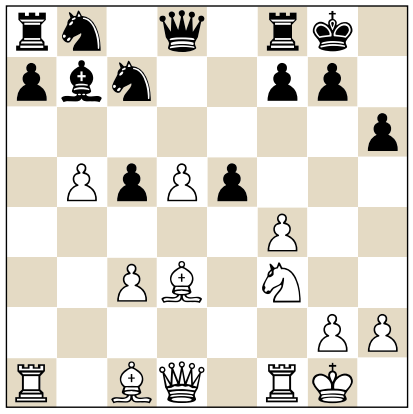
11.a4 ♗b7 As 11...bxa4 12.♗d3! gives White a dangerous attack.
12.♗d3



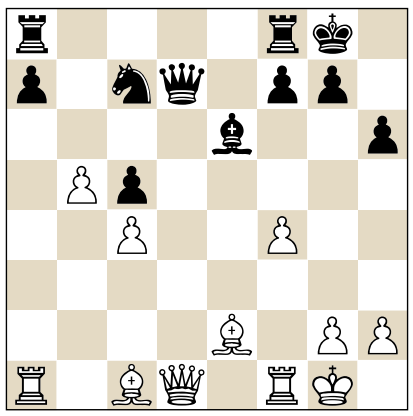
12...h6 After this new move I was out of book. Undoubtedly, Yifan is a very strong player, but I think she was not ready for this opening line, which is why Black ended up in a very unpleasant and difficult position right after the opening.
Black has to be careful. 12...♘xd5, for example, invites 13.♗xh7+! ♔xh7 14.♘g5+ ♔g8 (or 14...♕xg5 15.fxg5 ♘xc3 16.bxc3 ♗xc3+ 17.♗d2 ♗xa1 18.♕xa1, and White is winning) 15.♕h5 ♕xg5 16.fxg5 ♘xc3 17.0-0, with a clear advantage for White.
12...g6 was the best line in my notes. I had checked them before the game.
13.0-0



13...♗xc3 Again Black has to tread carefully. After 13...♘xd5 14.♘xd5 ♗xd5 White goes 15.f5! dxe5 16.f6!! ♕xf6 17.♗h7+! ♔xh7 18.♘g5+ ♕xg5 19.♗xg5, and Black is lost.
14.bxc3 dxe5
14...♗xd5 is met by 15.♗b1! dxe5 16.fxe5 ♘d7 17.♗xh6! (17...gxh6 18.♕d3).
15.axb5

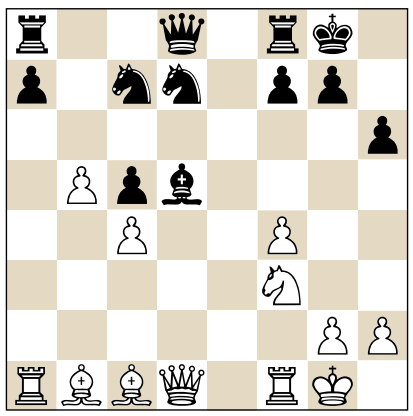


15...e4
Taking the pawn on d5 is not really an option.
White is much better after 15...♕xd5 16.c4 ♕d8 17.fxe5 a6 18.♗e3 ♘e6 19.♗b1!.
And after 15...♗xd5 16.♘xe5 ♘d7 17.♘xd7 ♕xd7 18.c4 ♗e6 19.♗e2!,

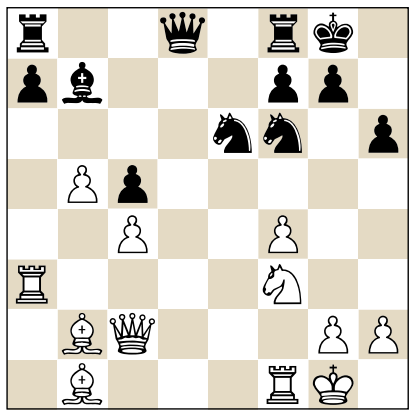


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

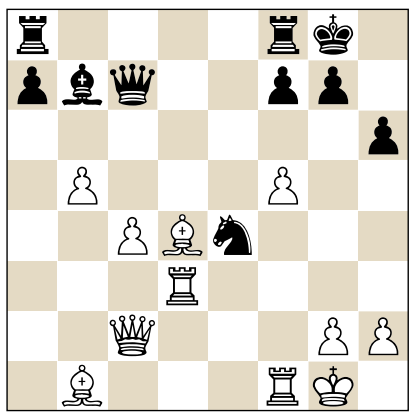
White is not even a pawn up, but Black's position is just about to collapse. Soon she will lose all pawns on the queenside. White is completely winning.
Also sad is 15...♘xd5 16.fxe5 ♘xc3 17.♕d2 ♘d5 18.♗e4, and White wins.
16.♗xe4 ♗xd5 17.♗b1! ♘d7 18.c4!



18...♗b7
Pretty hopeless is 18...♗xf3 19.♕xf3 ♘e6 20.♗e4 ♘d4 21.♕d3 ♖c8 22.♖xa7, and Black is lost.
And 18...♗xc4?? of course fails to 19.♕c2.
19.♖a3!?
After this move White has a fantastic grip on the black position.
19...♘e6 20.♕c2 ♘f6
During the game I thought 20...f5 was the only option, although Black has many weaknesses and, with precise play by White, will be unable to hold the position after, for instance, 21.♗b2 ♗e4 22.♕f2.
21.♗b2



21...♘e4?
A final mistake. But anyway Black's position was hopeless, e.g. 21...♗e4 22.♗xf6 ♗xc2 23.♗xd8 ♗xb1 24.♖xb1 ♖fxd8 25.g3 and after ♖ba1 and the manoeuvre ♘e5-c6, the a7-pawn will be lost.
22.♖d3 ♕c7 23.f5 ♘d4 24.♘xd4 cxd4 25.♗xd4



Game over.
25...a6 26.b6 ♕c6 27.f6 ♖fd8 28.fxg7 ♖d6 29.c5 ♖g6 30.♗a2 ♘g5 31.♖g3 ♘h3+ 32.♔h1
Black resigned. ■

Vladimir Kramnik

Russia – Age 42 – World ranking: 3 – Rating: 2800

Vladimir Kramnik has seen himself evolve continuously for the past twenty years. Being one of the most outstanding analysts of our time, he has always been able to both bring something new to the game and to change his own playing style and approach. Lately he has been having ups and downs. His approach to the game has made him one of the most unstable players on the circuit and his openings leave a very mixed impression. But the fact that he received the wildcard for the Candidates tournament suggests that he is motivated and as he knows that any cycle can be his last, I am sure the representative of the old guard will come up with something new again. Let's see what it is.

Strength: preparation

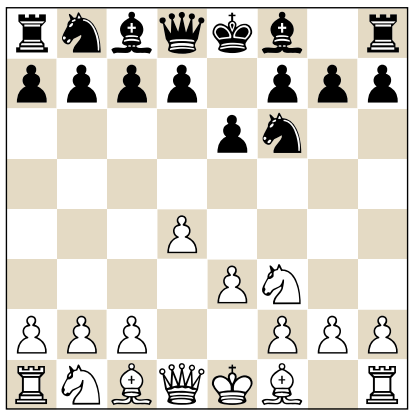
Weakness: energy

At the 2015 European Club Cup in Skopje, Vladimir Kramnik was in great shape. One of his victims was an old rival.

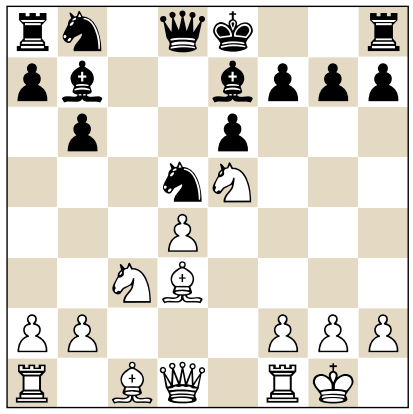
Vladimir Kramnik
Veselin Topalov
Skopje 2015 (5)
Queen's Indian

Notes by Vladimir Kramnik

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.e3

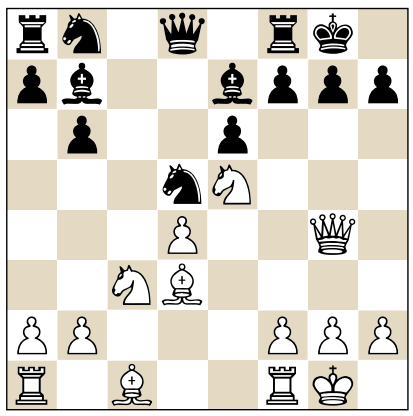


This opening scheme came as a surprise to my opponent. Literally a few days before our encounter I had played this at the Rapid and Blitz World Championships in Berlin, and quite successfully, but apparently Topalov had not looked at these games.
He stopped to think and chose an unsuccessful move order.
3...c5 4.♗d3 b6 5.0-0 ♗b7 6.c4
Already in this position Black does not have a great choice.
6...cxd4 7.exd4 ♗e7 8.♘c3 d5
This has to be played, since if 8...0-0 there follows 9.d5, and White has a stable plus, as has already been demonstrated in practice.
9.cxd5 ♘xd5 10.♘e5



10...0-0 11.♕g4
After the normal move order in the Queen's Indian with e2-e3 Black has more reliable ways of equalizing: he is not obliged to hurry with ...c7-c5 and can begin with ...d7-d5. The resulting position is not in itself easy for Black, and in addition the play here is crucial. To all appearances, Topalov either did not know or did not remember the vari-

ation. He spent a lot of time, although he did not respond badly – as well he could: it is possible that here Black altogether has no way of equalizing.

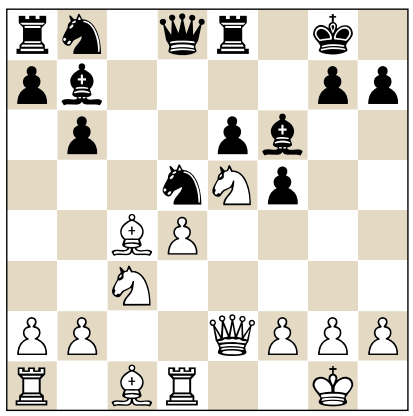


11...f5 It is clear that in such structures this is not a move that is made willingly. But in fact White already has quite a number of threats, one of the main ones being 12.♗h6 ♗f6 13.♕e4. After the main theoretical move 11...♘f6 there follows 12.♕h4, when it is not easy for Black to develop. Probably the best that he can devise is to go in for the complications of 12...♘e4 13.♕h3 ♕xd4 14.♗f4.

Here the theory does not yet come to an end; to go in for such play without computer analysis is rather difficult (I should add: and the more so after computer analysis).

12.♕e2 ♗f6 This has been played by some quite good players, but it is obvious that White has an enduring initiative. It is no longer possible to call the d4-pawn an isolani, since it is no weaker than the e6-pawn. I was happy with the outcome of the opening.

13.♗c4 ♖e8 14.♖d1



I had some vague recollections of this position. I remembered that after the critical 14...♘c6 the most interesting seemed to be 15.♘xd5 exd5 16.f4 – an unexpected move! The bishop is not hanging, and after, say, 16...♕d6 17.♗b3 Black has an extremely unpleasant position. There is no way for the knight to reach e4, whereas White can do what he wants, and in time he will begin play on the kingside. The bishop on b7 is bad, and White has a clear positional advantage.

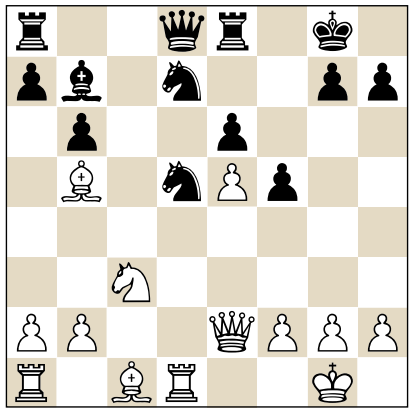
14...♘d7

But how to reply to this move was something that, I have to admit, I did not remember. Perhaps I did not pay much attention to this line, considering it favourable for White. It is obvious that he can maintain the pressure with practically any move, such as 15.♗d2, for example. Even so, I wanted to play more forcefully, and after quite a long think I went

15.♗b5

... which practically forces Black to play:

15...♗xe5 16.dxe5

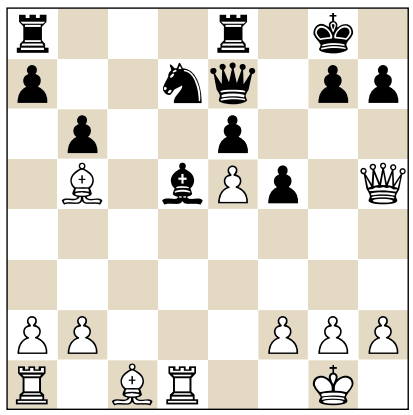


16...♕e7

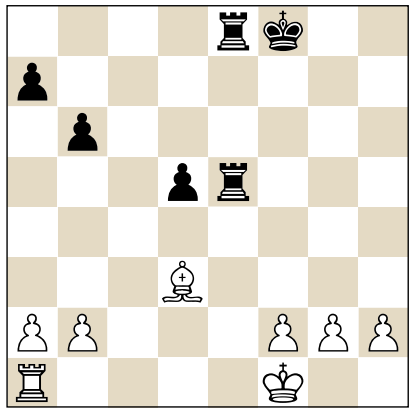
The immediate 16...a6 does not work because of 17.♘xd5 axb5 (in the event of the capture on d5 by the bishop, the a6-pawn is hanging, while capturing with the pawn is bad from the positional point of view), and here I thought that 18.♘f4 was good, but the computer demonstrates the resource 18...♕c7 19.♖d6 ♗d5 when Black, completely on the defensive, still somehow holds on, retaining drawing chances. 18.♘b4 is stronger, when in the event of 18...♕e7 19.♖d6 Black's position begins to crumble.

In any event, I considered 16...♕e7 to be the main continuation. Here White can play unhurriedly, but I thought that the queen move to h5 was the most critical.

17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.♕h5



In this position it is already difficult for Black to maintain material equality. 19.♗g5 is threatened, and it is very important that 18...h6 leads to a bad endgame after 19.♗xh6 gxh6 20.♕g6+ ♔f8 21.♕xh6+ ♔f7 22.♖xd5 exd5 23.♕h7+ ♔f8 24.♕xf5+ ♕f7 25.♗xd7 ♕xf5 26.♗xf5 ♖xe5 27.♗d3 ♖ae8 28.♔f1.



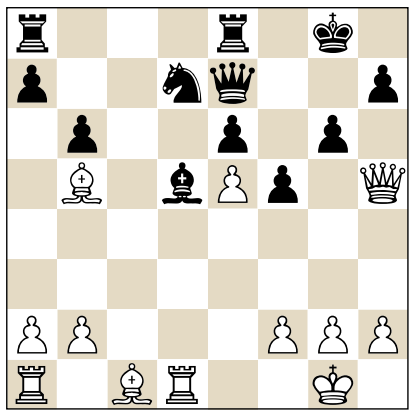
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I think that it is technically won for White, although the computer assesses it only as 'plus-equal'. The pawns advance, and I do not see how Black can create counterplay – apart from by trying to exchange rooks on the c-file, but even this does not guarantee an easy life.

I thought that Topalov would go in for the active continuation 18...♘xe5. I calculated the variations after 19.♗g5 when I was considering 15.♗b5. I saw that the amusing 19...♕b7 20.♗xe8 ♗xg2 would lose to 21.♖d7. There is also the tactical resource 19...♗f3,

which is pretty, but it hardly helps, since after 20.gxf3 ♕xg5+ 21.♕xg5 ♘xf3+ 22.♔g2 ♘xg5 23.♗xe8 ♖xe8 24.♖d7 the endgame with the rook on the 7th rank must be won.
Therefore Black has to retreat: 19...♕f8, and after 20.♗xe8 ♖xe8 21.♖ac1 the computer gives White quite a serious advantage, and this is probably so, although Black has drawing chances.

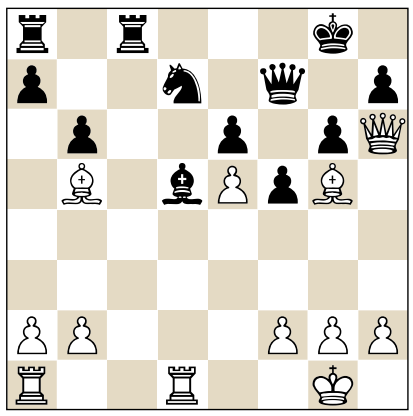
18...g6



19.♕h6

I very much wanted to post my bishop on f6, in order to create threats. Although on e3 it also stands well – all the same Black's king is weak. For example, 19.♕g5 a6 20.♗xd7 ♕xd7 21.♗e3 b5 and then h4 and b3 – following the same scheme.

19...♖ec8 20.♗g5 ♕f7

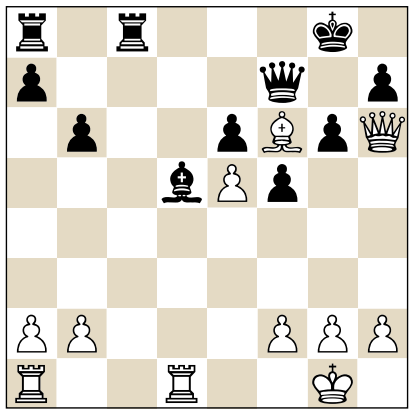


21.♗xd7

Here there was again a choice. I thought that the bishop on f6 and the potential attack were very dangerous. But I also could have kept the two bishops. For example, 21.♗f4 a6 22.♗f1 b5 23.b3, followed by simply playing the position slowly. White undoubtedly has pressure; he places his pawn on f3 and will strengthen his position. At some point Black exchanges queens on g7 and his position will be hard to breach. It seemed to me that the exchange on d7 was more promising, although, as analysis demonstrates, here also Black can hold the draw. On the other hand, chess is in general a drawn game, and often you have to choose continuations which are more to your taste.

21...♕xd7 22.♗f6 ♕f7

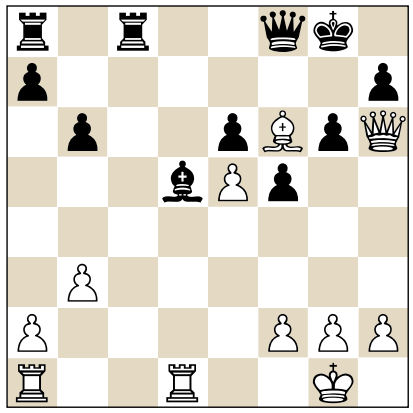
A significant moment. Black is forced to spend a tempo moving his queen, since he loses after 22...♖c2 (or 22...♖c4) 23.♖xd5! exd5 24.e6. After 24...♕c7 25.e7 the c1-square is defended, and White simply mates.



23.b3

I made this move 'mechanically', without seriously thinking about it. I decided that all the same it would have to be made sooner or later. It is very important to prevent the defensive manoeuvre ...♖c4, which applies in many variations when White begins advancing his h-pawn.
The computer suggests 23.♖d3 immediately, creating a direct attack without loss of time. For the moment 23...♖c4 is a blank shot, since after 24.b3 the rook has no decent squares on the 4th rank. However, there is the defence 23...♖c2 24.♖g3 ♖ac8 25.h4 ♖8c4. Black holds the position, albeit with difficulty; so the c4-square proves important nevertheless. The subsequent play is rather forcing: 26.h5 ♖g4 27.♖xg4 fxg4 28.♕g5 h6 (a slightly crazy resource) 29.♕xg4 (29.♕xh6 ♕h7) 29...g5. The queen is included via h7, and Black is probably alright here – all his pieces have become exceedingly active.

23...♕f8

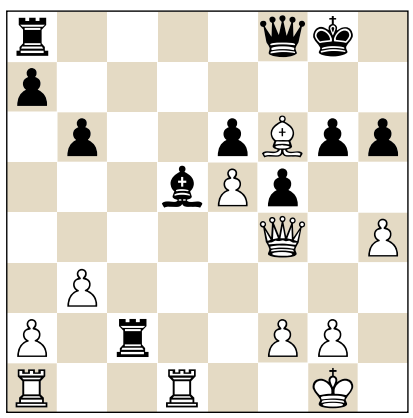


24.♕f4

Here I hesitated. In fact, the position is a rather complicated one to play, despite its apparent simplicity and the clarity of the plans. Both sides have to alternate attack and defence. Black wants to create counterplay, but he also needs to safeguard his king. White wants to attack, but he needs to watch for invasions of the second rank. It is very difficult to decide on a choice, which is often made intuitively. If you look at the game as a whole, it may be noticed that I made a choice in favour of restricting the opponent's play, whereas Topalov's was in favour of quick counterplay. What largely told here were preferences in style.
24.♕g5 looks more active and does not allow ...h7-h6, but it would appear that Black can create counterplay just in time: 24...♖c2 25.h4 ♖ac8 26.h5 ♕b4 (it was this that I did not want to allow; now it all ends by force in a drawn endgame) 27.hxg6 ♕g4 28.♕xg4 fxg4 29.gxh7+ ♔xh7 30.♖d4 g3 (a sacrifice of a second pawn) 31.♖h4+ ♔g6 32.♖g4+ ♔f5 33.♖xg3 ♖c1+ 34.♖xc1 ♖xc1+ 35.♔h2 ♖c2, and the computer begins indicating rigid zeroes.
The text-move reduces somewhat the tempo of the attack, but on the other hand I prevent the activation of the queen.
Here Black committed probably his only mistake in the entire game (if one disregards the badly played opening), and it proved decisive.
I was in no doubt that Topalov would play 24...h6, and I did not even examine other continuations. It seemed obvious to me that it was dangerous to allow h4-h5, except in cases when Black has

a very concrete tactical solution to his problems, as in the preceding variation. 24...h6 was a passive move, but an obligatory one.

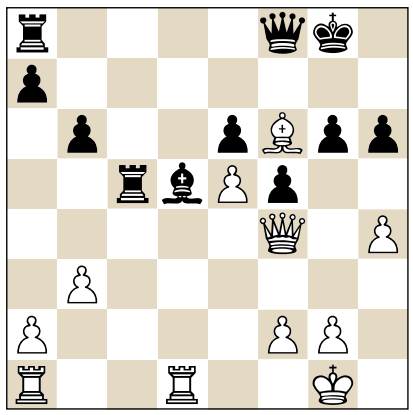
After 25.h4 there is another important move – 25...♖c5!. Black, so to speak, has to stand firm and be patient. It turns out that it is very difficult to breach his position. If he launches into counterplay with 25...♖c2



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

then the exchange sacrifice, which is constantly in the air, is very strong. After 26.♖xd5 exd5 27.♖d1 ♕c5 28.h5 White has a fearfully strong attack. Standing on c5, the rook prevents this sacrifice.

On the conclusion of the game I analysed the position after 25...♖c5.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

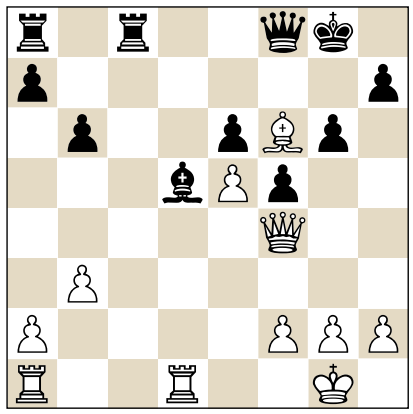
The human desire is not to exchange rooks and to play 26.♖d3 ♖ac8 27.♖ad1 – to retain as many pieces as possible on the board, for a potential attack. But in reality it is completely unclear how to break through in the event of 27...♔h7 28.♔h2 ♕f7 – there is no apparent plan.

Therefore the strongest procedure is the exchange of all the rooks. Say, 26.♖ac1 ♖ac8 27.♖xc5 ♖xc5 28.♖c1 ♔h7 29.♔h2 ♖xc1 30.♕xc1 ♕c5 31.♕d2. To be honest, during the game I thought that White could exert some slight pressure, but that in general this was an easy draw. After analysing, I realised that all was not so simple. In fact Black has altogether no moves: his king is tied to the h6-pawn, his bishop cannot move, because then the queen invades, and if ...a7-a5 there is always the possibility of 'latching on' by ♗d8, without allowing the exchange of queens. In some cases, if Black gives up a pawn with the exchange of queens, the opposite-coloured bishops ending may be lost – the white king rushes to the queenside. Zugzwang motifs appear. White strengthens his position – f2-f3, ♔g3, and at some time tries to break through with his queen into Black's position. Moreover, this position can probably be obtained with an extra tempo – with the pawn already on f3. If, for example, White does not exchange on c5, but begins with ♔h2.

I have no doubts that with accurate play the position can be held, but even so there are practical problems, and things are not so simple. It demands a lengthy and passive defence by Black. In any case, this was the best chance. I think that Peter Leko would have played this without thinking, but I suspect that even if Veselin had played ...h6, after h4 all the same he would have continued ...♖c2, since ...♖c5 is really not in his style.

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Vladimir Kramnik: 'If you look at the game as a whole, it may be noticed that I made a choice in favour of restricting the opponent's play, whereas Topalov's was in favour of quick counterplay. What largely told here were preferences in style.'



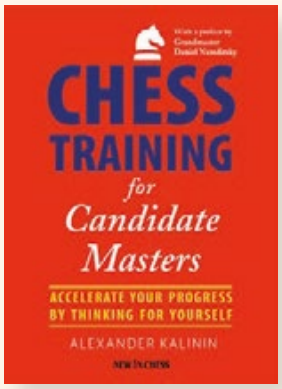
24...♖c2? 25.h4 ♖ac8 26.h5

It is probable that Black's position can no longer be defended. It turns out that he has no real counterplay, whereas his king does indeed come under a very serious attack.

26...♕e8

26...♕f7 is somewhat more logical, but here also after 27.♖d3 ♖2c3 28.♖ad1

NEW IN CHESS bestsellers



Chess Training for Candidate Masters

Accelerate Your Progress by Thinking for Yourself

Alexander Kalinin 208 pages - €18.95

"Sasha Kalinin has an acute understanding of what modern chess players struggle with and what they must do in order to improve." – *GM Daniel Naroditsky*

"Kalinin writes that the target audience of his book is up to about 2200 Elo in rating, but it embraces much more than that. It is a good book for both club players AND grandmasters!" – *GM Simen Agdestein, VG Daily Newspaper*

The Complete Manual of Positional Chess Volume 2

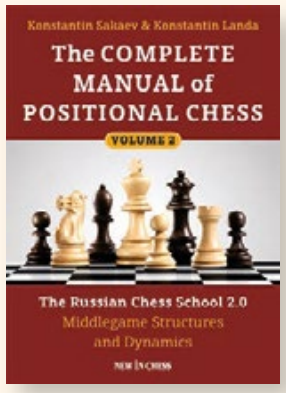
The Russian Chess School 2.0 – Middlegame Structures and Dynamics

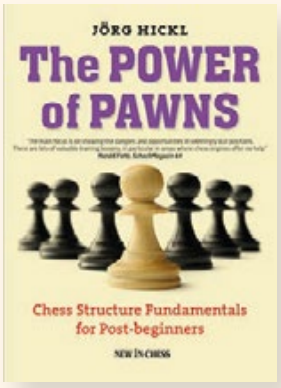
Sakaev & Landa 368 pages - €27.95

Volume 2 completes what is probably the most thorough grounding in the history of teaching chess.

"An excellent book, you can't get better than the Russian School of Chess." – *Grandmaster Daniel King*

"A thorough and convincing anthology."
Florian Jacobs, Max Euwe Center, Amsterdam





The Power of Pawns

Chess Structures Fundamentals for Post-Beginners

Jörg Hickl 192 pages - €18.95

"The didactic concept of the book is admirable. Each chapter defines the structures, explains the typical characteristics and shows the plans for both White and Black. The reader invariably receives useful tips for practical play." – *Harry Schaack, KARL magazine*

"There are lots of valuable training lessons, in particular in areas where chess engines offer no help."
Harald Fietz, SchachMagazin 64

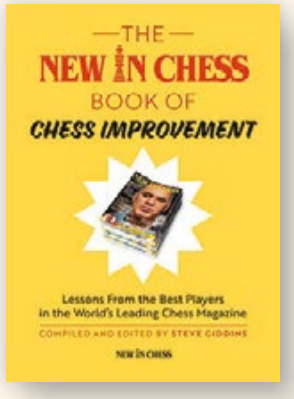
The New In Chess Book of Chess Improvement

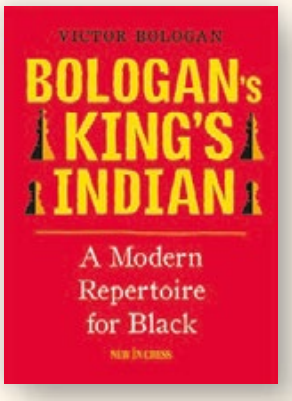
Lessons from the Best Players in the World's Leading Chess Magazine

Steve Giddins (editor) 336 pages - €22.95

Steve Giddins has arranged the most didactic annotations by the world's best players of the past three decades into thematic chapters.

"There is no doubt about it: the games and annotations really are top-notch and any player studying the material would definitely improve various aspects of their own play."
Sean Marsh, CHESS Magazine (UK)





Bologan's King's Indian

A Modern Repertoire for Black

Victor Bologan 368 pages - €29.95

In many lines Bologan presents two options to handle the Black position. With many new ideas and resources, and several offbeat sidelines that will enable you to surprise your opponent.

"Bologan's understanding of the King's Indian is second to few and here he maps out a pretty detailed repertoire for Black against all White's options." – *CHESS Magazine*

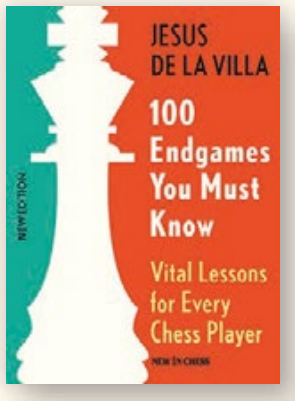
100 Endgames You Must Know

Vital Lessons for Every Chess Player

Jesus de la Villa 254 pages - €22.95

"If you've never read an endgame book before, this is the one you should start with."
GM Matthew Sadler, former British Champion

"If you really have no patience for endgames, at least read *100 Endgames You Must Know*."
Gary Walters Chess



The Berlin Defence Unraveled

A Straightforward Guide for Black and White

Luis Bernal 272 pages - €27.95

Finally: the Berlin + the Anti-Berlin for Club Players!

"The claim of 'unraveling' the Berlin is completely justified. An extremely instructive and clear-cut work."
Der Neue Tag Newspaper

"Bernal investigates the latest theoretical developments, but hasn't skimped on explanation." – *GM Glenn Flear*

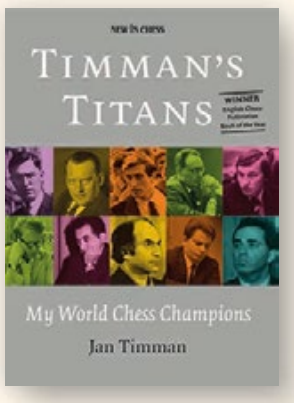
Timman's Titans

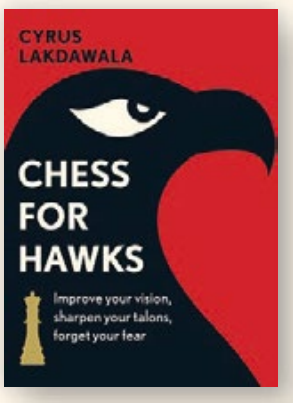
My World Chess Champions

Jan Timman 320 pages - €26.95

ECF 2017 Book of the Year

"The book must be read to obtain the full flavour of Timman's writing (..) The most informative, interesting and revealing book on the world champions covered, both as people and chess players."
ECF Book of the Year Judges





Chess for Hawks

Improve your vision, sharpen your talons, forget your fear

Cyrus Lakdawala 288 pages - €22.95

WINNER: Best Instructional Book
Chess Journalists of America

"A very good manual for those who feel they got stuck at a certain level and can't quite find the way to break through to the next level."
Carsten Hansen, author of 'The Chameleon Variation'

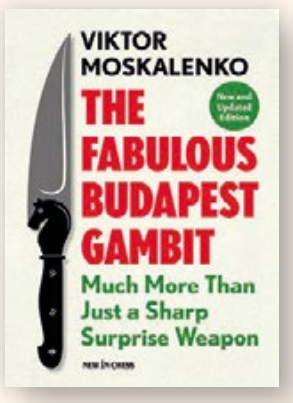
The Fabulous Budapest Gambit

Much more Than Just a Sharp Surprise Weapon

Viktor Moskalenko 288 pages - €27.95

Completely reworked and fully updated from the original 2007 publication; it has been extended by 25% and contains hundreds of improvements, alternatives and new ideas.

"Well-structured and fun to read."
Lubosh Kavalek, The Washington Post



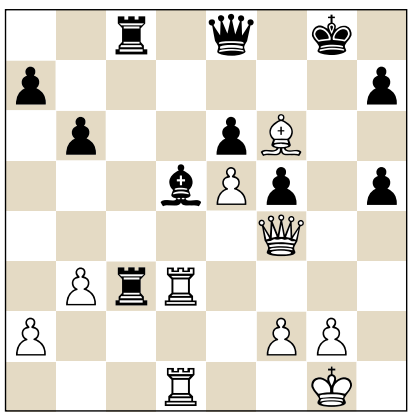
available at your local (chess)bookseller or at www.newinchess.com

gxh5 Black's position is unenviable. The unhurried 29.♔h2 can be played, but 29.♖xd5 exd5 30.♖xd5 is strong – the rook cannot be taken, and White has a very powerful attack.

27.♖d3 ♖2c3 Forced, since hxg6 hxg6, ♖h3 was threatened.

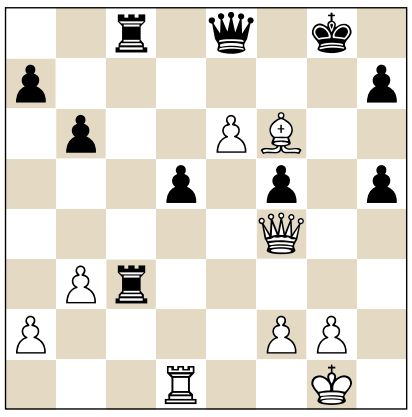
28.♖ad1 gxh5

Obviously this is the whole idea – to play the queen to g6, otherwise White will unhurriedly give mate.



29.♖xd5! As strong as it is natural. I had no great doubts about this move, but I exerted myself and checked the variations thoroughly.

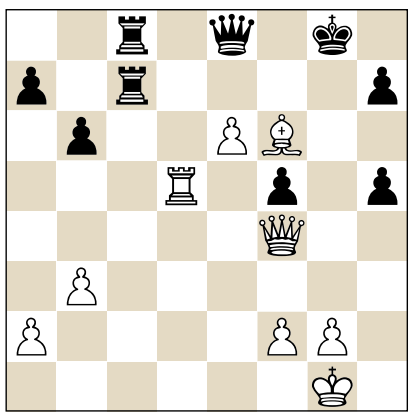
29...exd5 30.e6 According to the computer, 30.♖xd5 was simpler. It assesses the position as completely won for White. From the human point of view 30.e6 is better, since it leads to a forced win in all lines. It may be a little more complicated, but when I made the move I had already calculated all the variations given below.



30...♖3c7

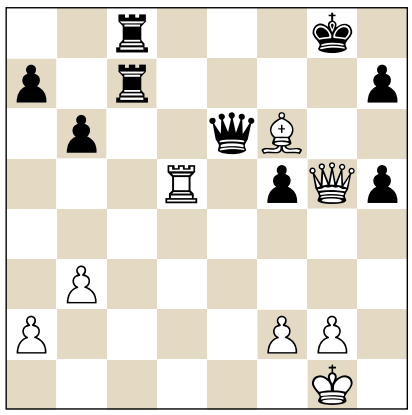
By this point Topalov had used up nearly all of his time. Apparently it was only here he realized that the planned 30...♖3c6 loses to 31.♖d3 ♖xe6 32.♖g3+ ♔f7 33.♕h6!. When I saw this resource I was already sure about the move 30.e6. Despite being the exchange up, Black has no defence. The main variation is 33...♖xf6 34.♕g7+ ♔e6 35.♖e3+, when White picks up everything. The attempt to give up rook for bishop by 30...♕g6 also will not do in view of 31.♗xc3 ♖xc3 32.♕b8+ ♔g7 33.e7. There only remains the move in the game.

31.♖xd5



31...♕xe6 The following echo-variations, using the language of study composers, seemed very attractive to me: if 31...♕g6, then 32.♕xc7, while if 31...♖c1+ 32.♔h2 ♕g6 – 33.♕xc1. The rook is quite unable to escape from the pursuit of the queen.

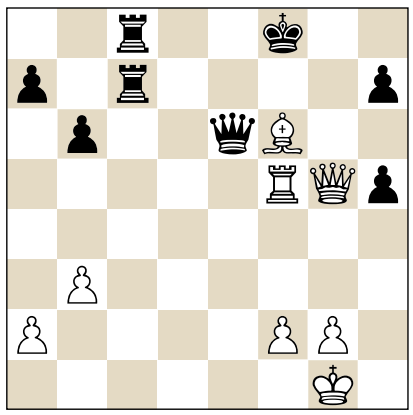
32.♕g5+



32...♔f8

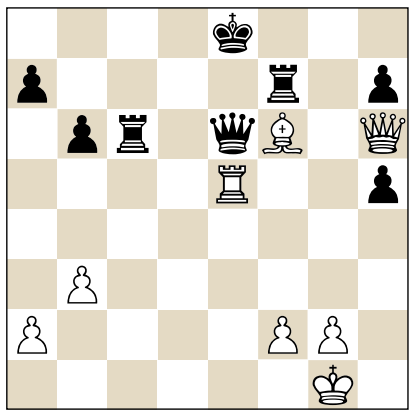
32...♔f7 is slightly more resilient, although it does not essentially change things: 33.♖xf5 ♖c5 34.♕xh5+ ♔f8 35.♗e5+ ♔e7 36.♕xh7+ ♔e8. I was intending 37.♖g5 (the computer considers 37.f4 to be simpler). White is threatening ♖g8, and after 37...♖xe5 38.♕h5+ with two extra pawns he will win anyhow...

33.♖xf5



Here, in the words of the Revolutionary song, 'a young soldier suddenly drooped his head'. The computer points out that after the natural 33...♖c5 34.♗e7+ ♔e8 there is an immediate win by 35.♖f8+ ♔d7 36.♗xc5, which, of course, is true. But for safety's sake I calculated the variation 35.♗xc5 ♖xc5 36.♕xh5+ ♔d7 37.♖xc5, which also wins easily.

33...♖f7 34.♕h6+ ♔e8 35.♖e5 ♖c6



It was on this resource that Black was pinning his last hopes in time-trouble. White has more than one way to win, but I chose an elegant and simple one.

36.♕xh5

Black is pinned across the board, he is left a great deal of material down, and here Veselin resigned.

I think that the game turned out to be good, interesting and of high quality, essentially with one single mistake. But the main thing was that at that moment it was already clear that our team were the main contenders for first place. We won the match by a margin of one point, and thus this game became a key one for the outcome of the entire tournament. ■

Wesley So

United States – Age 24 – World ranking: 4 – Rating: 2799

Wesley So has got all that it takes to be a top player. His calculation is good, his understanding very fine, and his tactical vision excellent. The psychological issues that haunted him in the past have long been solved as all the questions have now been answered. It took people some time to understand what had happened during his enormously quick rise to the very top, as he won many events with a huge score and lifted himself all the way to the world number two position. By now his approach, strengths and weaknesses have become apparent and the unusual public relations strategy, if you may call that, no longer shocks and neither distracts people from judging him as a chess player. I think this Candidates tournament comes just a little too late for him to be able to peak in it, but if everyone will blow themselves to pieces, he will be there to calmly pick up the pieces and cruise to first place.

Strength: **spirituality**

Weakness: **simplicity**

The following game against Mickey Adams was played in the London Classic, where Wesley So took first place and became the overall winner of the 2016 Grand Chess Tour.

Wesley So
Michael Adams
London 2016 (2)
Catalan, Open Variation

Notes by ***Wesley So***

To win the 2016 Grand Chess Tour was the cherry on top of the 'dream come true' year I've had. I don't think it is naive to admit I am stunned by the best year in my chess career so far. I was awarded the Samford Scholarship this year. Great men believing in you does a lot for your confidence. Two Gold Medals at the 2016 Olympiad, first in the Sinquefield Cup, then in the London Classic. Not too bad a performance in the Paris and Leuven Grand Chess Tour Rapid and Blitz legs (time-controls I am not that experienced in). I am not just stunned. I am a little terrified. I would like to thank the Lord and my family. Just speaking for myself, it would be impossible to do my best without this support system. Just participating in the Grand Chess Tour was a miracle in my life (I only qualified because Magnus could not play due to the Championship Match). I really believe the opportunity to work with the best in the world lifted my own game to new levels. So a big thank you to all my opponents, who have taught me so much!

One of those opponents was the great GM Michael Adams, and I want to present to you my game against him, as I think this was my best effort in the London tournament. The game is far from perfect. We both made mistakes and faltered here and there, but in general I like the ideas and the nature of this game. I had just won my first-round game against Hikaru Nakamura, but I had more black games in London than in the Sinquefield Cup, so my goal coming into Round 2 with White was to get something before I got Black again.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6

Michael Adams almost exclusively plays this as part of an ultra-solid repertoire comprised of the Nimzo/QGD openings. His choices with Black

are very similar to those of Vladimir Kramnik, and you can't go wrong with those!

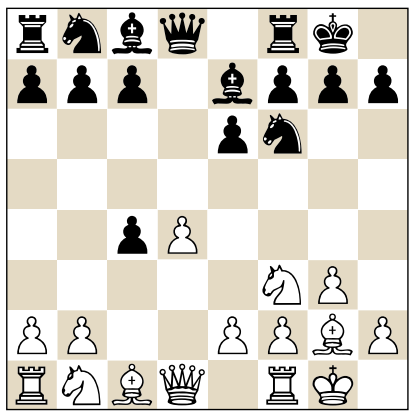
3.g3 An advantage with the London Classic is that they give you the pairings well in advance, so before arriving in London I had time to think through my strategies. Michael is a deceptively mild and quiet guy, but very tricky if you study him more closely, and once in London I started having doubts about whether my plan was solid... whether I should try something else... In the end I stuck with my planned Catalan and just tried to prepare my variations as deeply as possible.

Recently, Nakamura has been trying to prove an advantage with 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2, and it might be worth a try, but Adams has very good results with Black here.

3...d5 4.♗g2 ♗e7

Using the 4.♗g2 move order gives White the extra option of 4...♗b4+ 5.♘d2, since 5...dxc4? loses a piece to 6.♕a4+.

5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0 dxc4

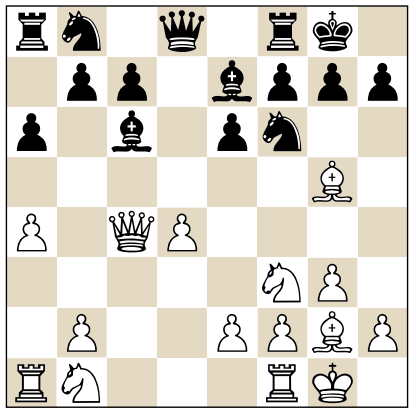


Michael goes for the most solid line against the Catalan. I believe this used to be Karpov's favourite system with Black, and it is amazing that it has withstood the test of time, because even today White is having difficulties proving an advantage anywhere.

7.♕c2 a6 8.a4

8.♕xc4 b5 9.♕c2 ♗b7 10.♗d2 used to be the most topical variation not so long ago, until Black found 10...♗e4 11.♕c1 c6!, threatening to win the pawn on d4 and seemingly equalizing comfortably.

8...♗d7 9.♕xc4 ♗c6 10.♗g5



I believe this is the old main line, and it recently has experienced a revival with players like GMs Aronian, Giri, Nakamura, Eljanov, Meier all giving it a try.

10...a5

Michael has recently played 10...h6 and 10...♗d5, so perhaps for this game he tries a third option!?

11.♘c3 ♖a6

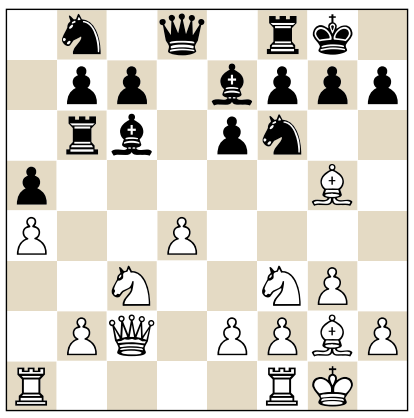
11...♘a6 looks very solid for Black as well.

12.♕d3

Normally White goes 12.e3, but then, after 12...♖b6 13.♕e2 ♘bd7, followed by ...h6, White has to give up his bishop pair.

12.♕d3 gives the extra option of being able to drop the bishop back to d2 or e3.

12...♖b6 13.♕c2



13...h6

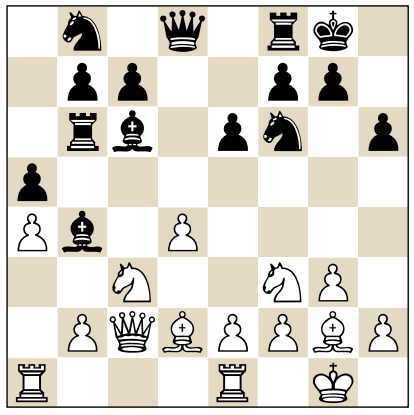
13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 ♘c6 15.e3 ♘b4 16.♕e2 h6 17.♗xf6 ♗xf6 looks totally fine for Black to me.

14.♗d2

I briefly contemplated 14.♗e3 ♘d5 15.♗d2 ♘b4 16.♕b1, when his knight does not seem to be doing much on b4. 14.♗xf6 ♗xf6 obviously does not give White much, and 15.♖fd1 can be met by 15...♗d5, threatening 16...♗b3.

14...♗b4 15.♖fe1

Preparing to occupy the centre with e4.



15...♗xf3

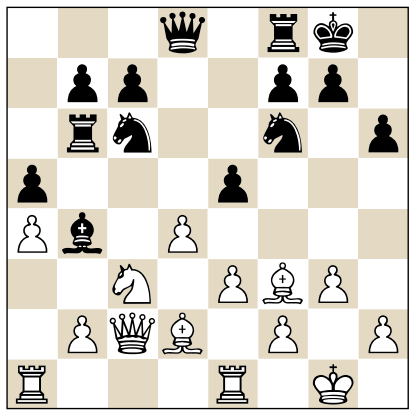
I was expecting 15...♗xc3 16.bxc3 ♗e4, when White seems to have a nice position, but my knight is pinned and he controls the b-file. Still, after 17.♕a2 ♘c6 18.♖ed1 I should be slightly better: 18...♗d5 19.c4 ♗xf3 20.exf3 ♘b4 21.♕b3.

16.♗xf3 ♘c6 17.e3

I felt I was doing well here, since I have the bishop pair and his rook looks a bit silly on b6. But Michael surprised me again by breaking in the centre right away.

17...e5

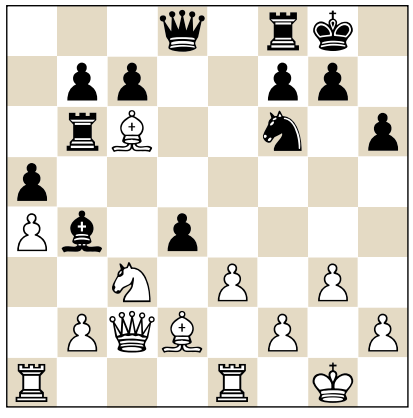
Michael decides to force matters. Objectively a normal move like 17...♕e7 is better, but perhaps Michael didn't want to give me time to consolidate with 18.♗g2 e5 19.d5 ♘b8 20.♖ed1 ♘a6 21.♘b5, and White has an edge.



18.♗xc6!

18.d5 is another option, although after 18...♗xc3 19.♗xc3 ♘b4 20.♕d2 e4 the well-placed knight on b4 assures Black a solid position.

18...exd4 18...♖xc6 19.dxe5 ♘d5 won't give Black enough for the pawn, although it will force White to play accurately, since without my Catalan bishop there are always going to be weak squares around my king.



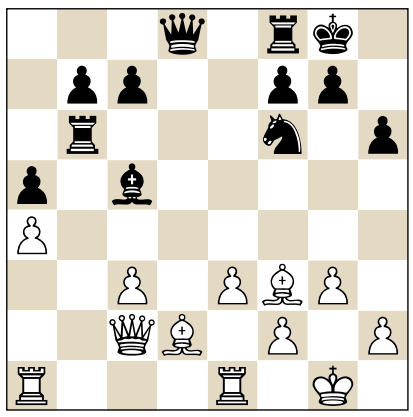
19.♗f3

I went for this, because I thought that at some later point, one of my rooks might be defended on d1 and I can slowly improve my position with ♔g2, etc.

However, during the game I wasn't sure of whether g2 or f3 was a better place for my bishop. Perhaps slightly more accurate is 19.♗g2 dxc3 20.bxc3 ♗c5 21.♖ed1. The point now is that Black's ...♘d7-♕f6 combo does not work, as there is no bishop to attack on f3. 21...♕e7 22.c4 ♖a8 23.♗c3. I like White, because I will have full control of the d-file and put pressure on his b7-pawn as well.

19...dxc3 20.bxc3 ♗c5

Now I had a good long think, because I felt it was a critical moment to try to increase my advantage, but even so I failed to find the best continuation for White.



21.♖ab1

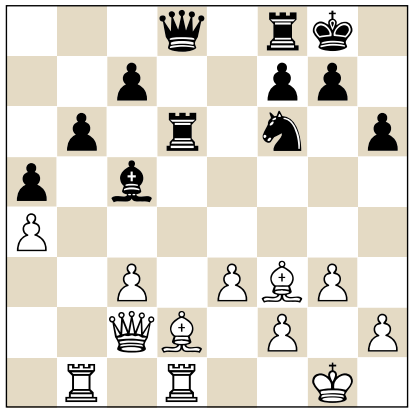
Much stronger is 21.♖ed1! ♘d7 (after 21...♕e7 22.c4, I seize control of the d-file, since 22...♗b4? 23.c5 is bad, because I win one of his queenside pawns) 22.c4 ♕f6. I was worried about this counter-attack, since Black's threats looked very powerful. Still, after 23.♗xa5 ♖b2 24.♕e4 ♘e5 25.♔g2, apparently there is nothing to be afraid of! A pawn is a pawn: 25...♘xf3 26.♕xf3, and White has good chances to convert it.

I even thought long and hard about 21.c4 ♗b4 22.c5 ♕xd2 23.♕xd2 ♗xd2 24.cxb6 ♗xe1 25.bxc7, when White seems to have a pleasant endgame, but here comes 25...♗xf2+! (25...♖c8 26.♖xe1 ♖xc7 27.♖b1 ♖c4) 26.♔xf2 ♖c8 27.♖c1 ♘e8 28.♗xb7 ♖xc7 29.♖xc7 ♘xc7 30.♔e2 ♔f8, and Black should hold without much difficulty.

21...♖d6

21...♖xb1 22.♖xb1 b6 is what I had expected, and it leads to very similar play to the game.

22.♖ed1 b6



23.c4 I'm a little hesitant to open up the diagonal for his bishop with 23.e4, although I did consider it. Black is just fine after 23...♘d7 24.♗f4 ♖xd1+ 25.♖xd1 g5!, though.

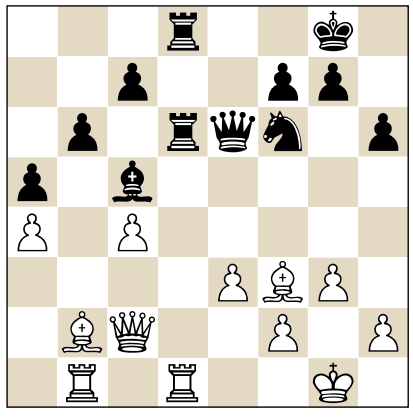
23...♕e7 24.♗c3 ♖fd8 25.♗b2

I just make a useful move while avoiding all his ...♗xe3 possibilities.

25...♕e6

Keeping an eye on the c4-pawn. 25...♖xd1+ 26.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 27.♕xd1 ♘e4 is the computer suggestion, although it's not entirely clear to me where his knight is going: 28.♕d3 ♘g5. Perhaps his idea is to go ...♘e6-c5 or to try to exchange queens.

25...♘d7 can be met by 26.♖d5, and then perhaps Black has nothing better than to go back with ...♘f6.



26.♖xd6

26.♔g2 might be slightly more precise, as Black does not have time for ...♘h7-g5 ideas, while I slowly improve my position. White is slightly better after both 26...♖xd1 27.♖xd1 ♖xd1 28.♕xd1 and 26...♘h7 27.♗d5 ♕e7 28.h4.

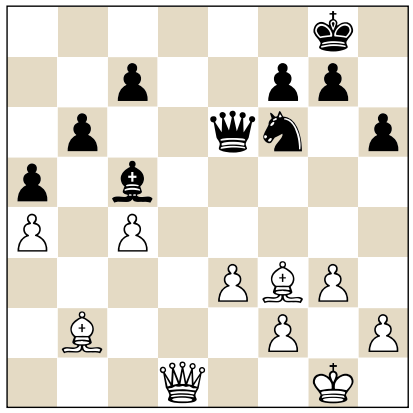
26...♖xd6

26...cxd6?! is not very good with a pair of rooks still on the board: 27.♖d1 ♖c8 28.♔g2, when White can perhaps take on f6 later, put the bishop on d5, and go ♖d3-f3.

27.♖d1

I didn't see any advantage for me in keeping the rooks on the board, and I also had to fight for control of the only open file.

27...♖xd1+ 28.♕xd1



28...♗d6

28...♕xc4?! looks bad for Black, and the forced sequence after 29.♗xf6 gxf6 30.♗d5 ♕b4 31.♕h5 ♕b1+ 32.♔g2 ♕h7 33.♕g4+ ♕g7 34.♕c8+ ♕f8 35.♕xc7 will not give him any reason to be cheerful (opposite-coloured

bishops favour the attacking side). At the same time, I was not sure how White would win here.

29.♕d4

Centralizing my queen while preventing ...♗e5. It was clear to me by now that I had lost most of my chances and that I should have played better on move 21. However, what's done is done and so I still tried to keep the game going rather than go for a draw with 29.♗xf6.

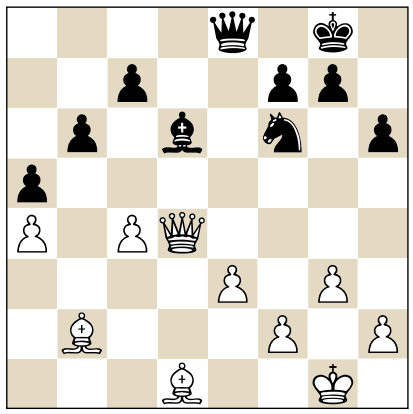
The computer's idea 29.c5 ♗xc5 30.♕d8+ ♘e8 31.♗d5 ♕e7 32.♕c8 is perhaps too deep to foresee. White has interesting compensation for the pawn, since Black's pieces are a bit paralysed right now: 32...♔h7 33.♗c4 g6 34.h4 h5.

29.♔g2 ♗e5 30.♕d8+ ♔h7 31.♕d3+ ♔g8 32.♗c1 looks okay for Black.

29...♕e8

Here I was anticipating 29...♕d7, when it is hard for White to avoid the queen swap. After 30.♗d1 ♗e5 31.♕xd7 ♘xd7 32.♗c1 the endgame should be just a draw objectively speaking, although Black still has to defend accurately.

30.♗d1



LENNART OOTES

Malcolm Pein, Tournament Director of the London Chess Classic, hands the trophy to the delighted winner Wesley So.

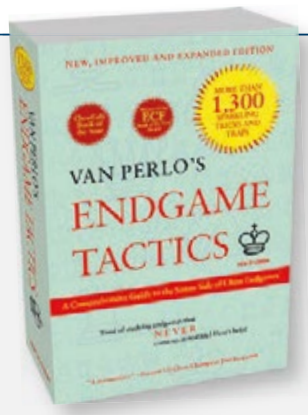
30...♕c6?!

This gives me time to consolidate my position.

Black should go for 30...♕e4 31.♕c3 (31.♕xe4 ♘xe4 gives Black an annoying knight jump to d2, preventing my king from approaching the centre) 31...♕b1 (31...♗b4 32.♕c2) 32.♕c2 ♕xc2 33.♗xc2 ♘d7. Michael asked me afterwards what I thought about this endgame, as he felt there was some slight danger for Black due to my bishop pair and slightly better pawn structure. It's hard to say. I felt that White should have some chances here, too, and the position is easier for me to play. But the question is, can White make real progress or not?

I checked with the computer, and it seems to imply that Black can hold fairly easily: 34.f4 f6. Black's best bet is to put his pawns on f6, g6 and, say, h6 or h5 and put his king on f7 and his knight on c5. This set-up seems to be an impenetrable fortress: 35.♔g2 ♔f7 36.♔f3 h5 37.e4 g6, and in top-level chess people would say 'this is just a draw'.

The alternative (instead of 34...f6) is 34...g6 35.♔f2 h5 36.♔f3 ♔f8 37.e4.



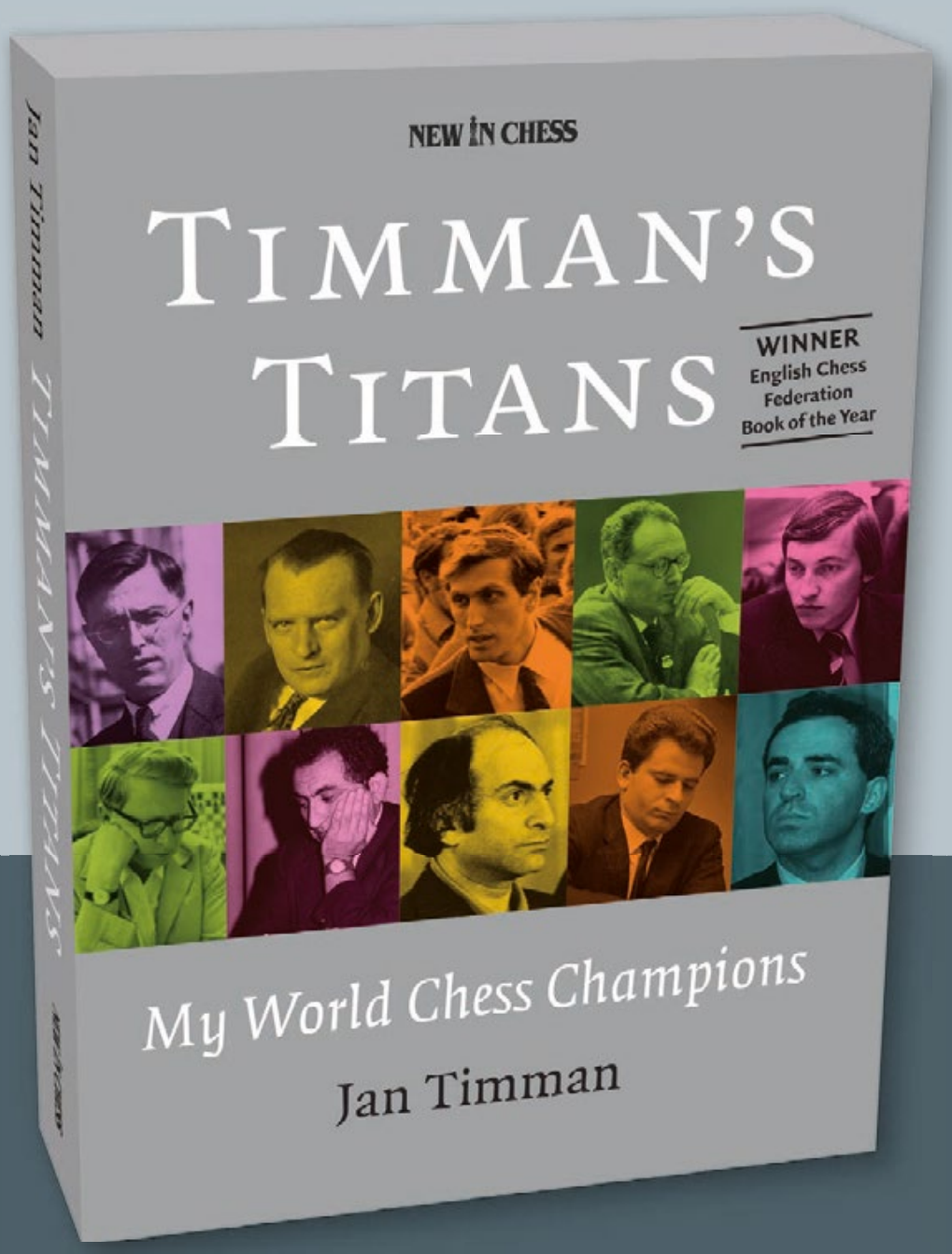
Did you know that endgames are actually fun?

"A powerful book. It does not wish to drill, it just wishes to entertain. And it does!"
Gerhard Josten, Rochade Europa

"It cannot but help to improve your chess, painlessly, enjoyably."
Chess Today

paperback | 608 pages | €29.95 | available at your local (chess)bookseller or at newinchess.com | a NEW IN CHESS publication

Fascinating stories and great chess!



Jan Timman portrays ten World Chess Champions that played an important role in his life and career. He not only presents his insider views of these chess giants, but his book is also an evocation of countless fascinating episodes in chess history, including many revelations about the great champions.

Each portrait is completed by a selection of illustrative games, annotated in Timman's trademark lucid style. Always to the point, sharp and with crystal-clear explanations, Timman shows the highs and lows from the games of the champions, including the most memorable games he himself played against them.

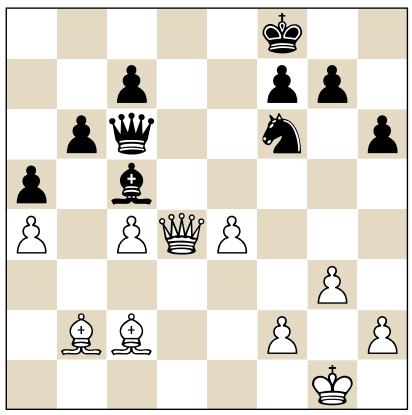
paperback ♦ 336 pages ♦ €26.95 ♦ available at your local (chess)bookseller or at newinchess.com ♦ a NEW IN CHESS publication

If White gets the e5-f4-g3-h2-pawn chain, Black will be in trouble, so 37...f6!. Now White may consider 38.e5 fxe5 39.♗xg6 exf4 40.gxf4 ♘c5 41.♗c2, but I think Black should hold here anyway.

31.♗c2 ♔f8 32.e4

White has to start pushing pawns at some point. I think this is the right moment, as Black's king is trying to post itself in the centre.

32...♗c5

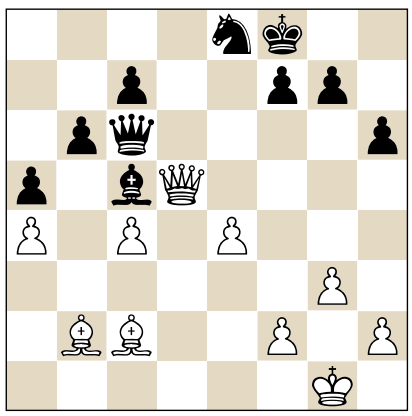


33.♕d8+!

It is very important to force his knight into a passive position.

33...♘e8 34.♕d5

Now that his knight is passive, I offer a queen swap. This is also the most natural move, as he was threatening to entrap my queen on d8 with ...♗d6.



34...♕g6 Apparently, Black's best defence is 34...♕d6!, and now:

– The point is that I should not play 35.e5 ♕xd5 36.cxd5 f6, when I cannot support my centre with f4, since my f-pawn is pinned.

– 35.♔g2 ♘f6 36.♕xd6+ cxd6 looks close to a draw.

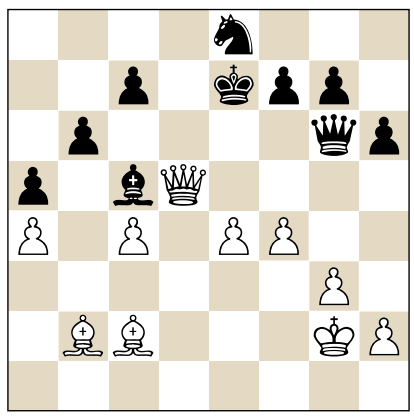
But bad is 34...♕xd5 35.cxd5 ♘d6 36.♗d3, when I have powerful connected central pawns that may be supported by f4 and ♔g2-f3. In addition, the sacrifice 36...b5 almost never works here, since my bishops control everything: 37.axb5 a4 38.♔f1 a3 39.♗c3.

35.♔g2

Preparing f4.

35...♔e7 36.f4

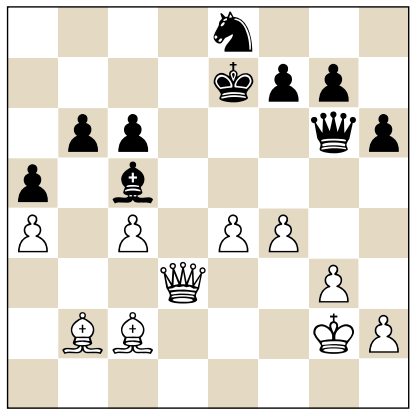
I just played the most natural move, but this is a serious inaccuracy, since Black can exploit my weakened king's position now. I should have played 36.h4!, threatening h5, while at the same time keeping my king safe enough to prevent any possible ...♘f6 counterplay: 36...c6 37.♕e5+ ♔f8 38.♕c3 ♕g4 39.♕d3.



36...c6?!

Here Michael missed a good chance to solve his problems: 36...♘f6! 37.♕e5+ (37.♗xf6+ ♕xf6 38.e5 ♕e6, with equality; 37.♕c6 ♕g4! draws at once, since White's king is too vulnerable: 38.♗xf6+ gxf6 39.♕xc7+ ♔e8) 37...♔d7 38.h3 ♗d6, and Black is completely okay.

37.♕d3



37...♘c7?

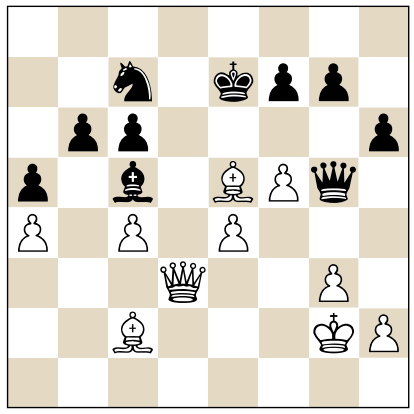
A huge blunder, but Michael was very low on time, having only a few minutes to make the time-control. Remember, unlike in other tournaments, in the London Classic we only got the increments after move 40. He should have played 37...f6 38.♕e2, when White remains better, but Black is still in the game.

38.f5 After this it's over, since Black loses material.

38...♕g5

Black also loses after 38...♕h7 39.f6+ gxf6 40.♗xf6+ or 38...♕d6 39.♕xd6+ ♗xd6 40.♗xg7.

39.♗e5!



39...♘e6

If 39...♕c1 then 40.♗xc7 ♕g1+ 41.♔h3, and I will threaten mate with 42.♕d8.

And 39...♘a6 40.♗f4 ♕g4 41.♗d1 ♘b4 42.♕d2 loses the queen.

40.fxe6

Here Michael lost on time, but Black loses a piece anyway, since 40...♕xe5 is mate after 41.♕d7. ■

> **'I really believe the opportunity to work with the best in the world lifted my own game to new levels.'**

Levon Aronian

Armenia – Age 35 – World ranking: 5 – Rating: 2794

Levon Aronian is no doubt one of the strongest players of our time. He has been dominating the 'under Carlsen' world of chess for some years now. Recovering from a semi-crisis, when he even dropped out of the top-10, the Armenian wizard has risen back to the highest positions and now he is back right at the top, with only Magnus Carlsen having the right to call himself his superior. One doesn't have to be a genius to point out Levon's

Strength: opening preparation

Weakness: psychology

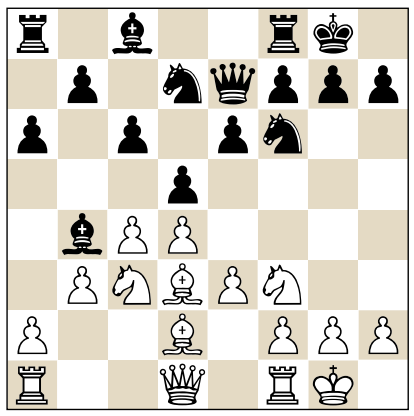
apparent psychological problems, which only got worse with people pointing them out and with every recent World Championship cycle going to pieces for him in the crucial moments of the Candidates tournament. By now many of Levon's friends and foes have put him into a deep hole and it will require enormous mindfulness and mental strength for him to get out of it and to put himself into a carefree and relaxed state. This crucial aspect aside, Levon's opening preparation has been working out incredibly well lately. Yet, it remains to be seen what his strategy of shuffling and recycling deep ideas accumulated over the years in his relatively narrow opening repertoire will bring him in an event where everyone spends a couple of months studying him deeply.

Last year Levon Aronian not only won Altibox Norway Chess, he also defeated the local favourite, World Champion Magnus Carlsen, in a brilliant game.

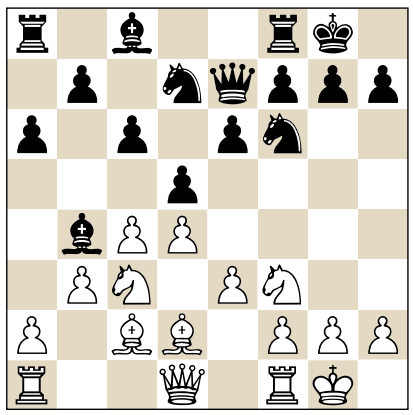
Levon Aronian
Magnus Carlsen
Stavanger 2017 (4)
Slav Defence

Notes by ***Levon Aronian***

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6 5.e3 a6
A surprise, but, in view of the fact that in recent times my opponent has often been playing the Slav, an explicable choice. As a rule I guess the choice of my opponents once every three times.
6.b3 I last played this variation in 2013 in four games, and in all four I was Black. Gelfand, Nakamura and Ding Liren preferred 6.c5, which leads to a ponderous strategic battle. The move in the game is considered less forceful, but I wanted to obtain a more lively game.
6...♗b4 The popularity of the move 6...c5 always nonplusses me. Black appears to have only one knight developed, and he makes another move with a pawn! Romantics...
7.♗d2 ♘bd7 8.♗d3 0-0 9.0-0 ♕e7
The second most popular move. In his match for the World Championship with Gelfand in 2012, Anand successfully tried the more direct 9...♗d6. After 9...♕e7 there is more scope for creative play.



10.♗c2 I found this move in 2005 or 2006. In principle the idea is very typical for this position, and even in the 10.♕e1 a5 variation 11.♗c2 is a good move. White prepares for play with the possible advance e4, and he simultaneously defends against 10...e5, to which there is a strong reply in the form of 11.♘xd5 cxd5 12.♗xb4 ♕xb4 13.dxe5, with advantage.

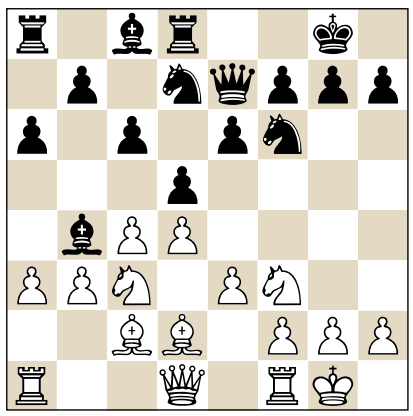


10...♖d8

A logical move, which, however, has a veiled but significant drawback.

Black also has other sound moves, in the form of 10...b6 or 10...♖e8. In these cases White's play involves either a pawn sacrifice by 11.a3 ♗xa3 12.e4, or preparation for the e4 advance by 11.♖e1.

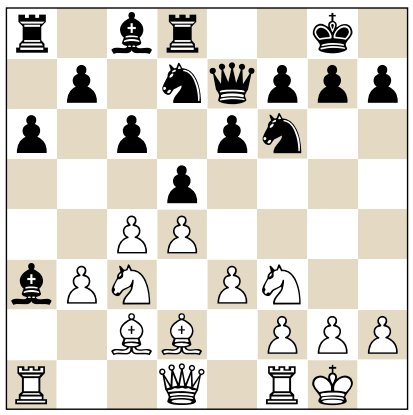
11.a3



After thinking for 17 minutes and realizing that apart from a3 there were few other decent moves, I assumed that it was probably very dangerous to capture on a3.

11...♗xa3

The lesser evil was probably to go in for the passive but solid position after 11...♗d6 12.e4 dxe4 13.♘xe4 ♘xe4 14.♗xe4 ♘f6 15.♗g5, but in this case 10...♖d8 must be deemed a bad move.

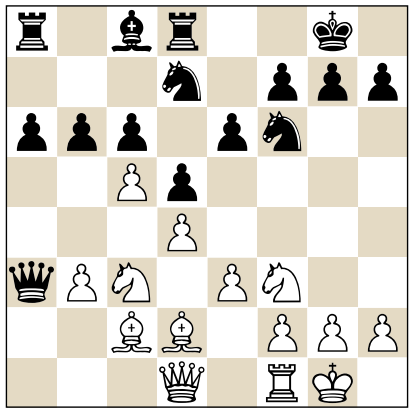


12.♖xa3

12.e4 leads to compensation, but the timely possibility of raising the stakes could not be missed!

12...♕xa3 13.c5 b6

While my opponent was thinking I mainly studied 13...e5, which seemed to me to be the strongest. After 14.♘b1 ♕a2 15.♗b4 a5 16.♘c3 ♕xc2 17.♕xc2 axb4 18.♘a2 White has the advantage. The move in the game could have led to a rapid showdown.



14.b4

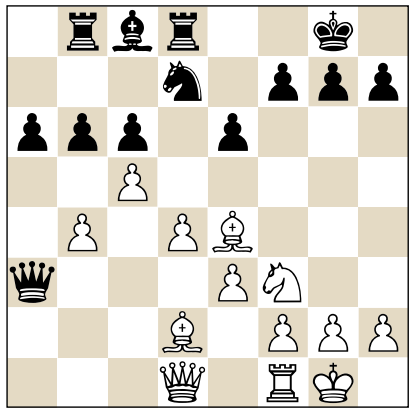
A mistake. White had a simple way to gain an advantage, about which I did not even suspect anything. After the simple 14.♘b1 ♕a2 15.♕c1 (I forgot about this move and calculated only 15.♗b4, which leads to sharp play) Black has nothing better than 15...bxc5 16.♘c3 ♕a5 17.♘xd5 ♕b5 18.♘c7 ♕b8 19.♘xa8 ♕xa8 20.♗a5 ♖e8 21.dxc5, with incurable damage to his position.

14...♘e4

The only way for Black to retain the tension in the play was the incredible 14...♕b2!. In principle this is logical – in order to save yourself against wild animals, you have to approach them and show that you are not afraid of them. Easier said than done.

15.♘xe4 dxe4 16.♗xe4 ♖b8

A move made after lengthy thought. Simple moves lead to unpleasant endgames where White possesses important trumps in the form of the d4/c5-pawns.



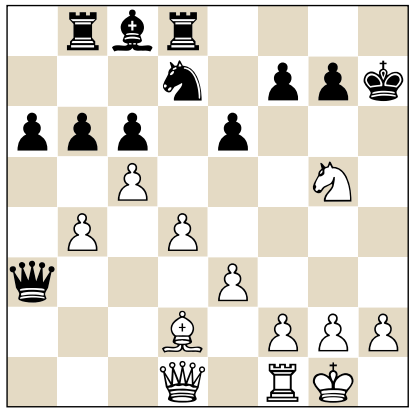
17.♗xh7+

If 17.♗xc6 things did not seem altogether clear to me after 17...a5, while if 17.♕c2 I was concerned about 17...♘f6. If the move in the game had not been so tempting, I would possibly have found the stronger 17.♕c2 ♘f6 18.♗xh7+ ♘xh7 19.♘e5, with the terrible threat of ♘c4.

17...♔xh7

If 17...♔f8 there was the very strong 18.♕c2 bxc5 19.♘e5, with an attack leading to gain of material.

18.♘g5+

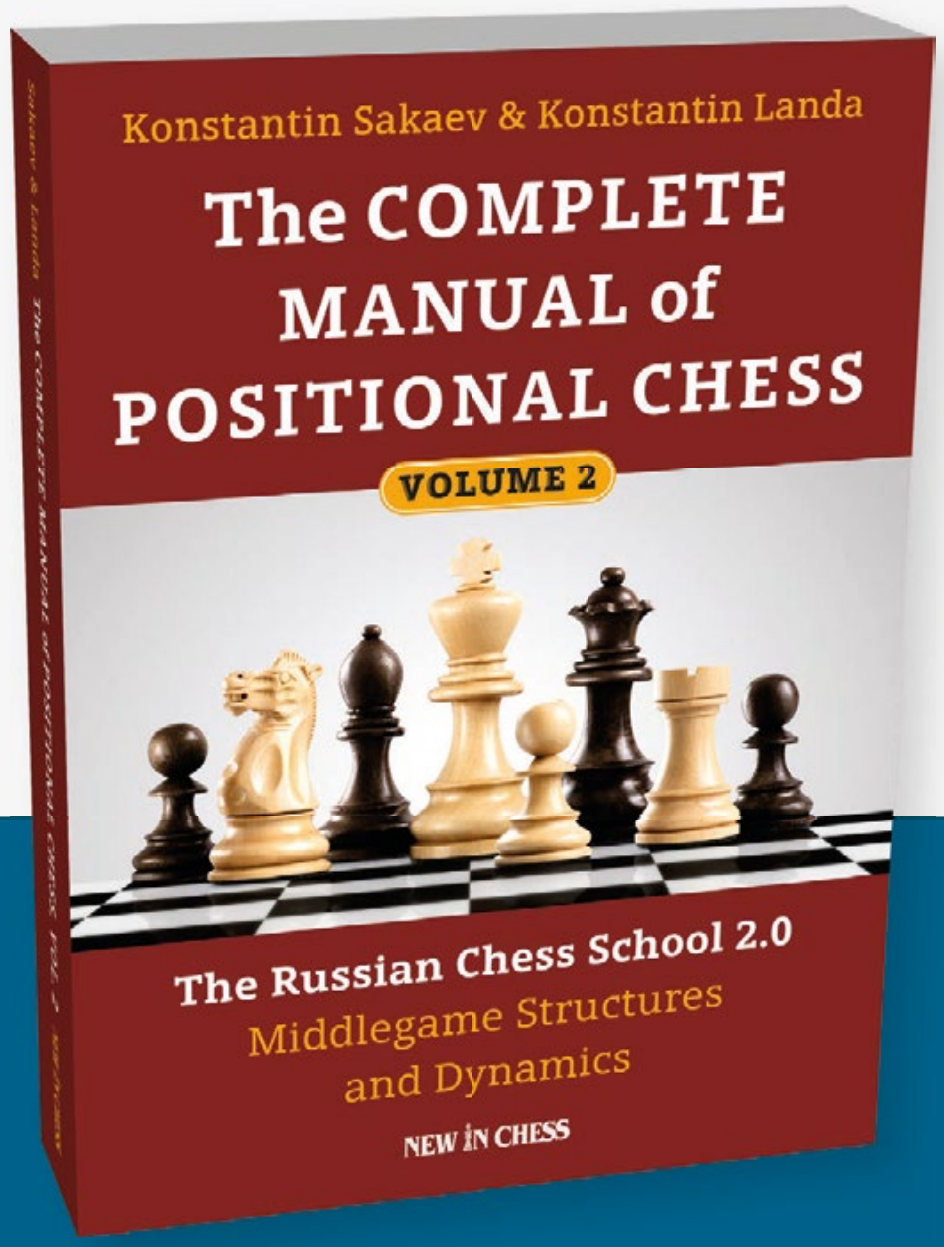


18...♔g8

The only move, leading to a series of forced decisions. After 18...♔g6 19.♕g4 f5 20.♕g3 ♔f6 (20...f4 21.♕xf4 ♖f8 22.♕h4 with a winning attack) 21.d5 the black pieces are too passive for a proper defence of their monarch.

19.♕h5 ♘f6 20.♕xf7+ ♔h8

Now complete: probably the most thorough grounding in the history of teaching chess


Konstantin Sakaev & Konstantin Landa
The COMPLETE MANUAL of POSITIONAL CHESS
VOLUME 2
The Russian Chess School 2.0
Middlegame Structures and Dynamics
NEW IN CHESS

Volume 2 completes this groundbreaking manual which was recently created for chess teachers at the DYSS, the special sports school for young talents in Moscow. Sakaev and Landa present a complete set of instructions and tips for trainers and self-improvers.

This second Volume deals with Middlegame Structures and Dynamics. You are handed basic and advanced tools to improve in all important areas, such as: handling different pawn structures, exploiting weaknesses in your opponent's position, attacking the enemy king, detecting dynamics and tactical motifs, finding resources for defence and counterattack in precarious positions and, last but not least: restricting the role the chess computer plays in your life.

paperback | 368 pages | €27.95 | available at your local (chess)bookseller or at newinchess.com | a NEW IN CHESS publication

MARIA EMELIANOVA

Game over. As Levon Aronian suppresses his joy and calmly signs his scoresheet, Magnus Carlsen realizes that once again it is going to be tough in Stavanger.

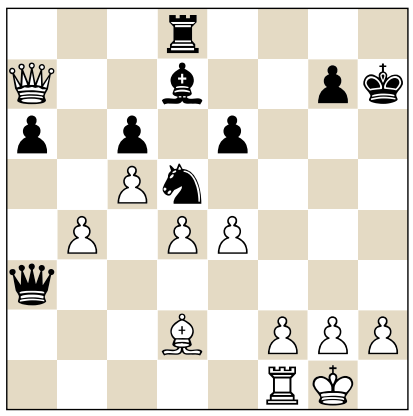
21.♕c7 ♗d7 22.♘f7+ ♔h7

I also reckoned that the king stands worse at g8 than at h7.

23.♘xd8 ♖c8 24.♕xb6

With the king on h7 White has the interesting possibility of playing 24.♕f4 ♖xd8 25.e4, with the threat of e5, but I was aiming for a position from my calculations.

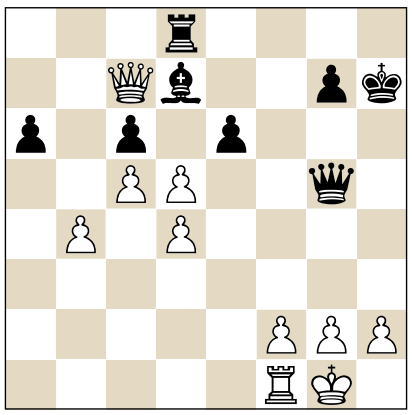
24...♘d5 25.♕a7 ♖xd8 26.e4



26...♕d3

A mistake, which both I and my opponent considered to be the strongest move. In my calculation of the move 17.♗xh7+ I assessed the position after 26...♘f6 27.♗g5 ♕xb4 (27...♔g6 is bad because of 28.♗xf6 ♔xf6 29.♕c7 ♔e7 30.d5) 28.e5 ♕xd4 29.exf6 gxf6 and thought that White had reason to be hopeful. To my surprise, it has to be admitted that White has only a small plus after 30.♕c7 ♖f8 31.♗e3.

27.exd5 ♕xd2 28.♕c7 ♕g5



29.dxc6

It is surprising, but this natural move is a blunder, denying White chances of winning.

After the strongest move 29.d6 Black has few opportunities for counterplay and White can gradually activate his rook and achieve success.

It is important to note that after 29.d6 the idea 29...e5 30.dxe5 ♗h3 does not work because of 31.♕xc6, when the queen controls the situation.

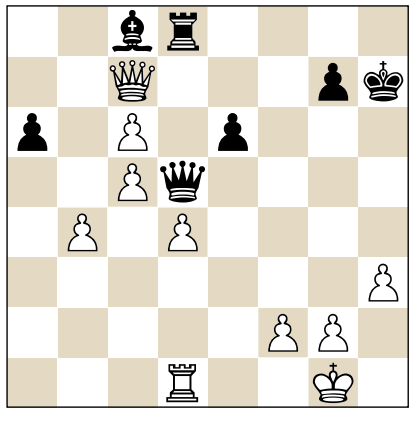
29...♗c8

29...♗e8 loses material after 30.♕b7.

30.h3 ♕d5

If 30...e5 White wins by 31.f4 exf4 32.♕xf4, since the queen and rook come into play.

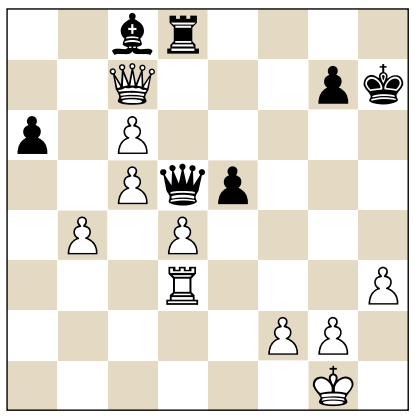
31.♖d1



31...e5

A delay, which costs Black the game. He could have saved it with an attack on the f2-point by 31...♖f8. After both 32.♕d6 ♕b3 33.♕xf8 ♕xd1+ 34.♔h2 ♕xd4 and 32.♖d3 ♕e4 the result is a draw.

32.♖d3



The rook wreaks havoc in the black position.

32...exd4 33.♕e7 ♗f5

33...♖g8 was more resilient.

34.♖g3 ♗g6 35.♕h4+

Black resigned.

Of course there were many mistakes in the game, but on the other hand it was interesting enough. ■

Fabiano Caruana

United States – Age 25 – World ranking: 8 – Rating: 2784

Fabiano Caruana certainly knows how it's done, as he has managed to win a few events that were no weaker than the Candidates tournament, with his '7 out of 7 start' victory in Saint Louis in the 2014 Sinquefield Cup being one of the highlights of modern chess history. His confidence is enormous, his mind rational and his concentration fantastic. Yet, the last couple of years seem to have been somewhat hectic and fuzzy, when I go by his games. He certainly no longer gives it his very best effort and while he has been able to keep his high rating thanks to his confidence and occasional outbursts of focus, it seems to me that in this state, with all the temptations of the real world, he will not be able to play his ideal chess. I doubt that he will be able to readjust his mental state back to when he was at his peak in such a short matter of time. But even if he won't, with a couple of months of preparation and some luck here and there, Fabiano is very likely to be the guy this time.

Strength: **confidence**

Weakness: **opening preparation**

In last year's Altibox Norway Chess, Fabiano Caruana introduced a new idea against Hikaru Nakamura's Najdorf. With great effect.

Fabiano Caruana
Hikaru Nakamura
Stavanger 2017 (9)
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

Notes by ***Fabiano Caruana***

I had been having a dismal event and wasn't playing for much in terms of overall result, but I had a hope to finish the tournament on 50%, so I felt motivated to win. Hikaru had been having a great event, and with a win in this game would likely tie for first, so I was sure he would also come out swinging.

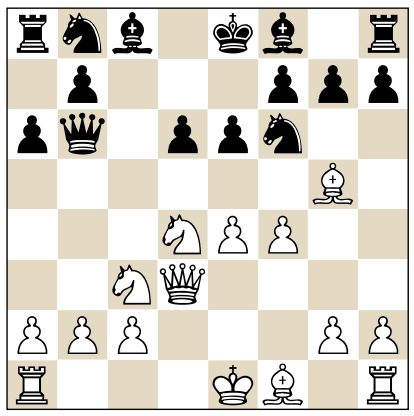
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6

Over the years we've had our share of Najdorf battles. The most recent one, in London, I won with some good preparation (see Caruana's notes in New In Chess 2017/1 – ed.), but Naka was up for another theoretical duel.

6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♕b6

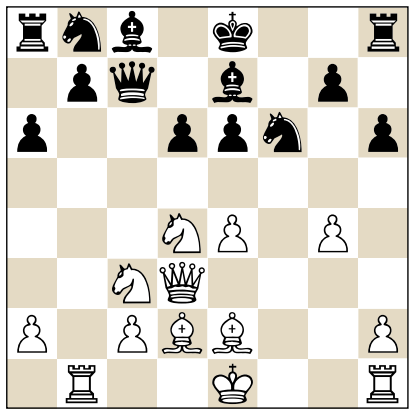
7...h6 8.♗h4 ♕b6 was played in London, following in the footsteps of MVL. However, the tried and tested method is the immediate Poisoned Pawn Variation, which has been a rock for Najdorf players for decades; White has never been able to find a reliable antidote.

8.♕d3



Not as common as 8.♕d2, but still a well-explored move, which was originally championed by the late, great Vugar Gashimov and several other top Azeri players. Hikaru himself played 8.a3 and beat Nepomniachtchi not long before this game.

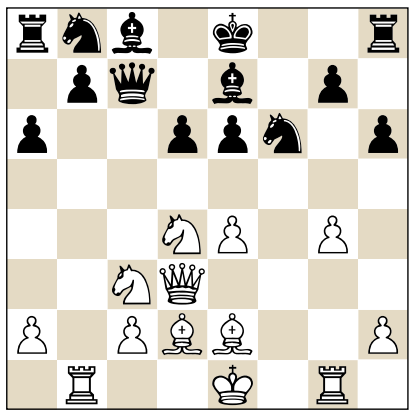
8...♕xb2 9.♖b1 ♕a3 10.f5 ♗e7 11.fxe6 fxe6 12.♗e2 ♕a5 13.♗d2 ♕c7 14.g4 h6



There were numerous options for both sides on the way, but we quickly went for the main starting position of this line. White has tried countless attempts to break down Black's defence here, with no outstanding results. Probably the best known game in this line is Gashimov-Grischuk, where Grischuk won by marching his king to b1 with a board full of pieces.

15.♖g1!?

This is the new move, which I had analysed long before and hadn't expected to get in this game! Fortunately, I remembered the main details of my analysis and I was able to work out the rest while Hikaru was thinking. Previously, the main moves had been 15.♕h3 and 15.e5, and while 15.♖g1 isn't necessarily better than other moves, it is very difficult for Black to navigate the maze of options over the board.

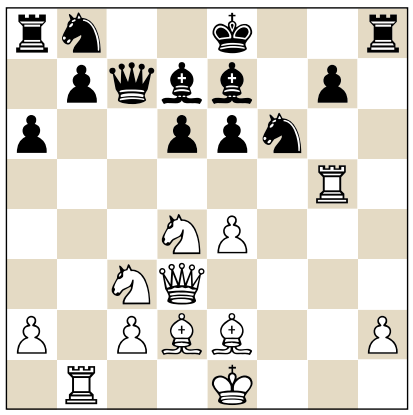


15...♗d7

15...♘c6 16.♘xc6 ♕xc6 17.e5 dxe5 18.♕g6+ ♔f8 19.g5 hxg5 20.♕xg5 was another line I had spent lots of time analysing. Black's best is 20...♔e8!, which is in my view a very challenging move to find over the board.

16.g5 hxg5 17.♖xg5

Now Black has a big choice to make. I spent a solid 45 minutes pacing, waiting in anticipation to see how Hikaru would respond.



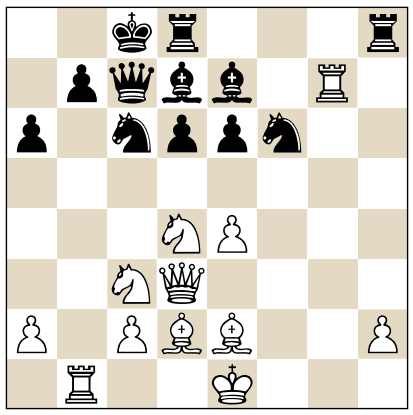
17...♘c6!?

This one really surprised me though! I knew the move was decent for Black, but it's so risky and difficult to calculate that I never expected anyone to play it.

17...♖g8? surprisingly just loses: 18.e5 dxe5 19.♘e4! exd4 (19...♘xe4 20.♗h5+ ♔d8 21.♘xe6+ winning) 20.♘xf6+ ♗xf6 21.♗h5+ ♔d8 22.♗a5, and the queen is lost! Beautiful geometry.

17...♖h7 is a good move, which will likely lead to a draw, but Black will have to walk a tightrope for many moves to come.

18.♖xg7 0-0-0



19.♘cb5

This is the reason why 17...♘c6 is so dangerous to play. Naka definitely saw this possibility, and probably intuitively felt the ensuing endgame would be tenable. That's 100% correct, but Black still has some work to do before the draw is guaranteed!

19.♕xa6? is cute, but doesn't contain a strong threat, so Black can safely play 19...♘xd4.

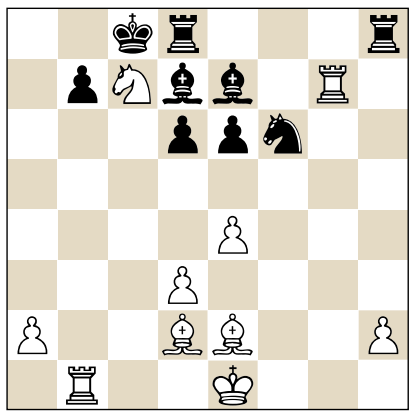
19.♘db5 amounts to the same thing as the game.

19...axb5 20.♘xb5 ♘e5!

The only move. 20...♕b8?? 21.♖xe7 is lights out.

21.♘xc7 ♘xd3+ 22.cxd3

Here Hikaru thought for a long time, and it became clear after a while that what he had intended didn't satisfy him. He began to become visibly upset with his position.



22...♘g8?

And this awful move was the result. Black was not at all in such dire straits to place his knight passively on the back rank.

After 22...♖xh2! 23.♖c1 ♖h1+ 24.♗f1 ♔b8 25.♖xe7 looks like a piece, but after the strong 25...♖f8! White loses it back because of the pin. The position quickly simplifies and peters out to a draw. For example: 26.♘xe6 ♗xe6 27.♗h6 ♖xh6 28.♖xe6 ♖h1 29.♔d2 ♘xe4+ 30.dxe4 ♖hxf1 31.♖xf1 ♖xf1 32.♖xd6 ♖f2+ 33.♔e3 ♖xa2, with a draw.

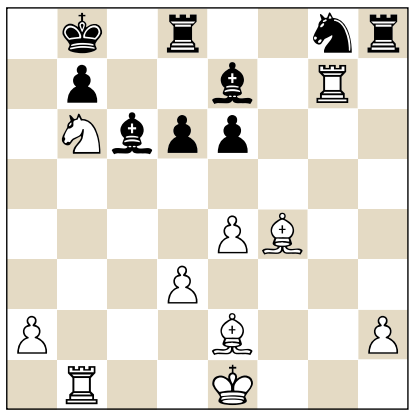
Even 22...♖h7, though not ideal, was better than the passive solution Hikaru chose.

23.♘a8?

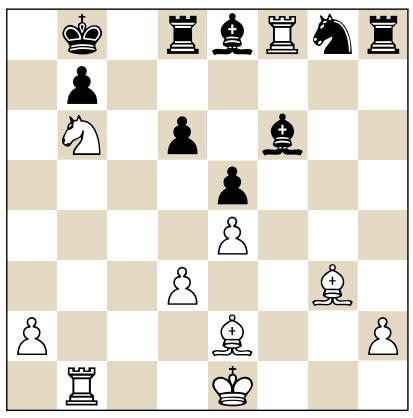
This is a natural and obvious choice, but spoils a part of the advantage.

23.♗a5! was likely winning: 23...♖xh2, and here the cool 24.♔d2! is absolutely awful for Black. His pieces are all tied up, and if 24...♗f8, 25.♘b5! is an

important point. The rook is indirectly defended because of the attack on d6!
23...♔b8 24.♘b6 ♗c6 25.♗f4

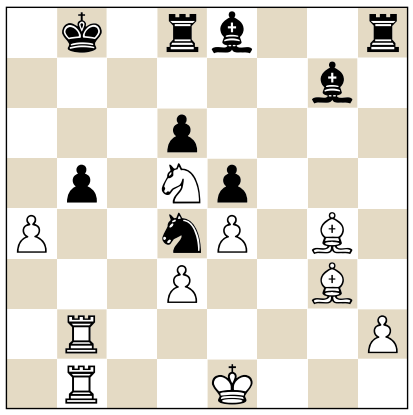


25...e5?
I was very happy to see this. I was more worried that he would activate his passive bishop.
25...♗f6! 26.♖g2 ♘e7 looks a lot more harmonious to me. Black still has reasonable drawing chances.
26.♗g3
Now it already seems like a technical task.
26...♗f6 27.♖f7 ♗e8 28.♖f8
It's rare to see a rook like that, wedged right in between Black's army, trapped but also choking Black's entire position.

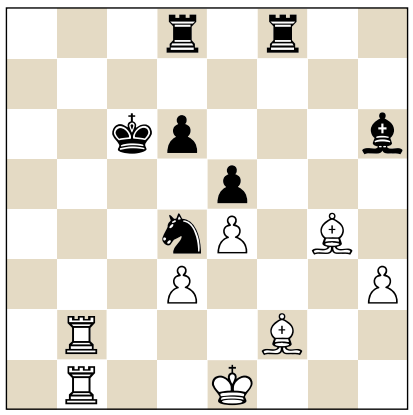


28...♗g7 29.♖f2 ♘e7 30.♗g4
An accurate move. The rook is swinging over to b2 to participate in the attack. I could see it dawned on Hikaru that his position is now completely lost.
30...♘c6 31.♖fb2 ♘d4 32.♘d5 b5
32...♗c6 33.♘e7, and it all falls apart.
33.a4
Now I win a second pawn, the game is decided. To compound his problems, Hikaru was running low on time.

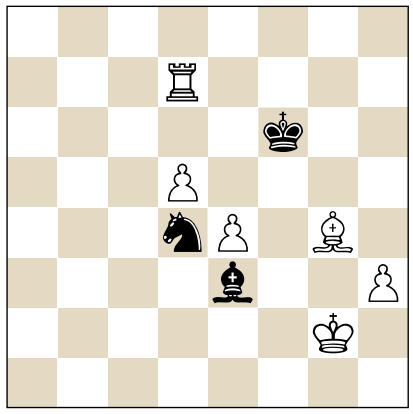
In another theoretical duel between Fabiano Caruana and Hikaru Nakamura in the Najdorf, a new idea, 'analysed long before', proved extremely dangerous.



33...♗h6 34.axb5 ♖g8 35.h3 ♔b7 36.♘e7
The final blow is the knight coming to c6. Black's king is opened up and will get stuck in a mating net.
36...♖f8 37.♘c6 ♗xc6 38.bxc6+ ♔xc6 39.♗f2



With the simple but deadly threat of 40.♗xd4 and 41.♖c2, mating.
39...♖xf2 40.♔xf2 ♖f8+ 41.♔g2 ♗e3 42.♖b8 ♖xb8 43.♖xb8 d5 44.♖c8+ ♔d6 45.♖d8+ ♔e7 46.♖d7+ ♔f6 47.exd5 e4 48.dxe4

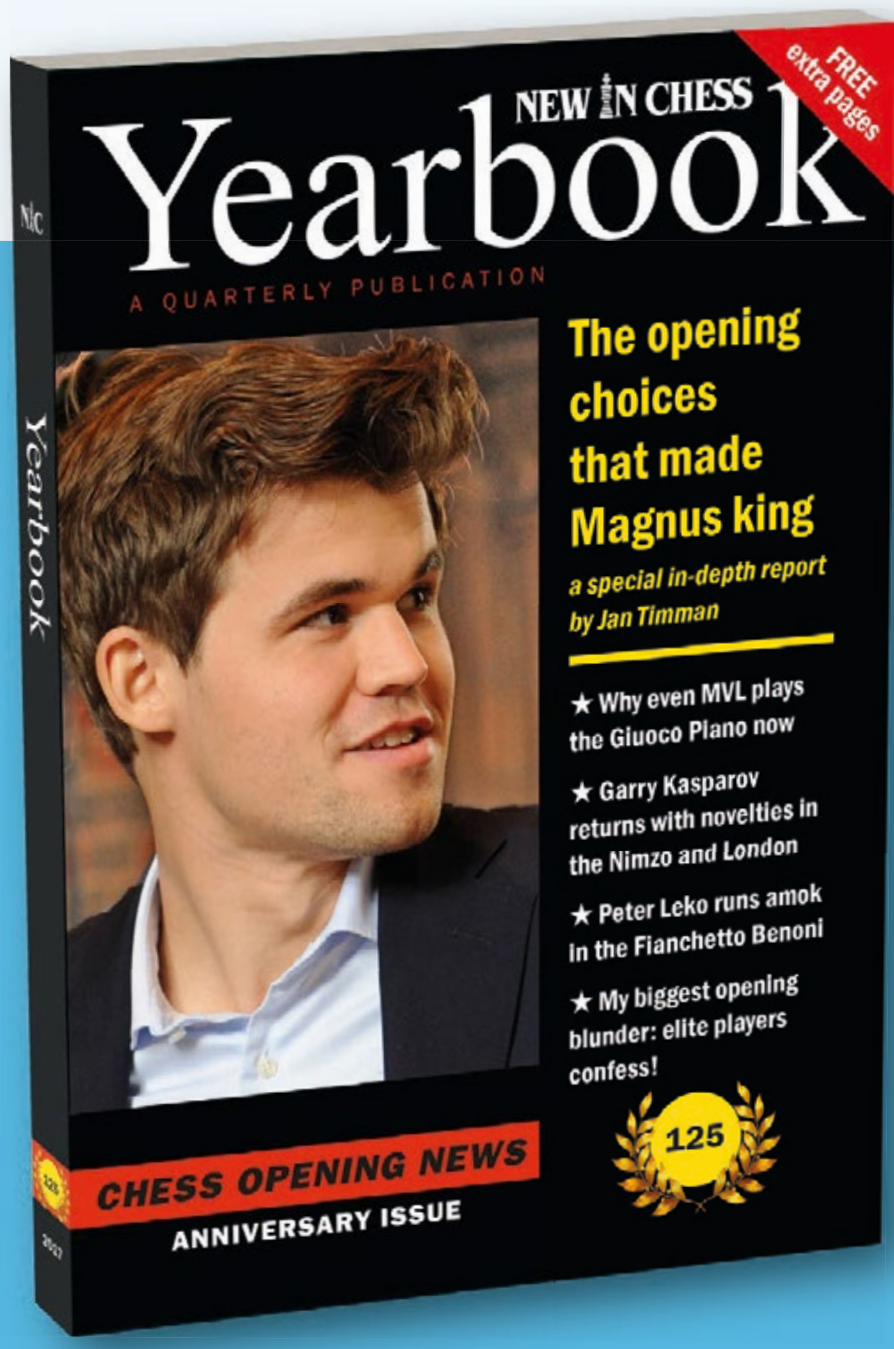


I think at this point the game could have been safely resigned. An exchange and three pawns is usually sufficient to win.

'I could see it dawned on Hikaru that his position is now completely lost.'

48...♗f4 49.h4 ♘b5 50.h5 ♗e5 51.♗f5 ♔g5 52.♗g6 ♘d6 53.♖e7 ♘c4 54.♖e6 ♗f6 55.d6 ♘e5 56.♗f5 ♘d3 57.♖xf6 ♔xf6 58.d7 ♔e7 59.h6
Black resigned. ■

The Anniversary Issue with lots of extras


NEW IN CHESS
Yearbook
A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION
FREE extra pages
The opening choices that made Magnus king
a special in-depth report by Jan Timman
★ Why even MVL plays the Giuoco Piano now
★ Garry Kasparov returns with novelties in the Nimzo and London
★ Peter Leko runs amok in the Fianchetto Benoni
★ My biggest opening blunder: elite players confess!
125
CHESS OPENING NEWS
ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

- ★ The secrets behind Carlsen's openings
- ★ The definitive opening statistics
- ★ 'My biggest opening blunder'
- ★ The best opening books
- ★ Free pages extra

With answers to urgent questions such as:

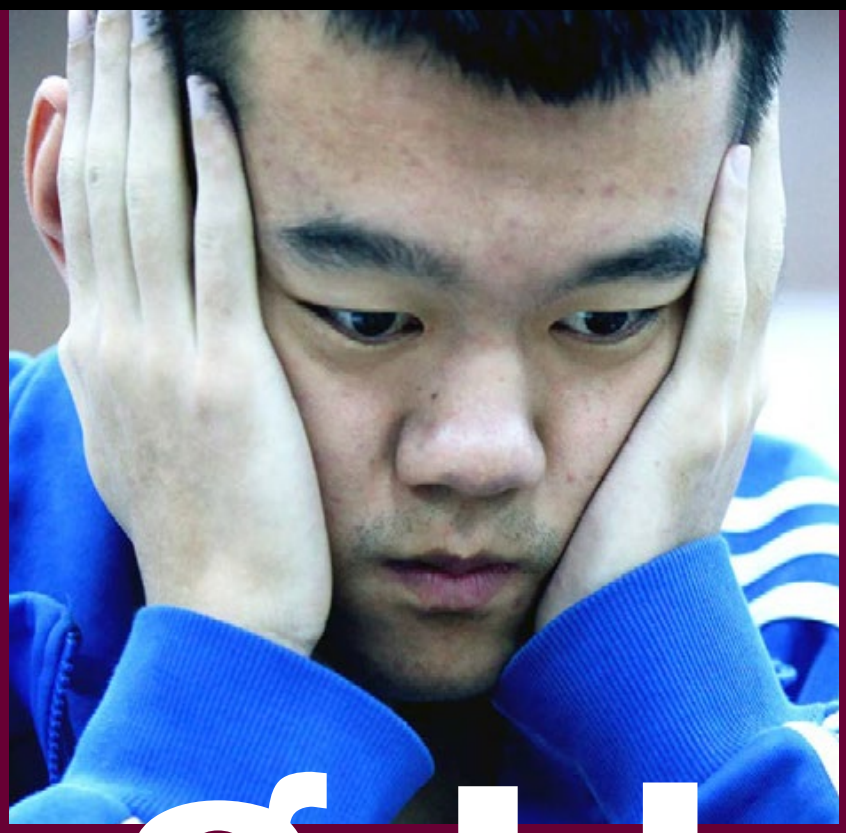
- What are the latest ways to avoid the main lines in the Najdorf?
- What was Bobby Fischer's opening line in his first phone conversation with Andras Adorjan?
- How did Leko breathe new life into the Fianchetto Benoni?
- How good is Hector's gambit line 7.♗e2 vs the Kan Sicilian?
- What is Nigel Short's latest attacking weapon against the Classical French?
- How did Vladimir Fedoseev effectively counter Kramnik's Exchange Caro-Kann?
- Is the Modern Alekhine Defence only good for blitz?
- Is the provocative 6...♗c5 viable in the Reversed Dragon?
- Is 8.h4 in the Mieses Scotch only good for desperados like Alexander Morozevich?
- Can Black sac a piece in the Bogoljubow Opening?
- How good is Portisch' book My Secrets in the Ruy Lopez?
- What were Garry Kasparov's Nimzo and London novelties in St. Louis?
- Is the Gothenburg Variation busted?
- What was Adhiban's audacious innovation in the 'boring' queenless QGA?
- What is the sharpest way to meet Karpov's 17...f5 in the Zaitsev Ruy Lopez?
- Which one of Fabiano Caruana's three novelties in the Najdorf Poisoned Pawn was the best?
- What were Ding Liren's delightful discoveries in the Catalan for the World Cup?
- With what English lines did Levon Aronian score 5 out of 6 in Tbilisi?

Paperback | 270 pages | € 29.95

Please have a look at the free apps: www.newinchess.com

Get it on Google play

Available on the App Store



Ding Liren

China – Age 25 – World ranking: 11 – Rating: 2769

Ding Liren is a player with a straightforward style and this has brought him very far. His opening approach is incredibly direct and predictable, yet he keeps going forward, both literally and figuratively, no matter whether you outsmart him or not, put him onto the defensive or have to run for your life yourself. I can't call him confident, as I don't think he can be judged in these terms. I think if his opponents will take their time, study him and prepare accordingly he will have trouble getting anywhere. Still, as laziness, cowardice, lack of focus or determination are not an issue for the first Chinese protagonist in the Candidates tournament, I would not write him off.

Strength: **determination**

Weakness: **naivety**

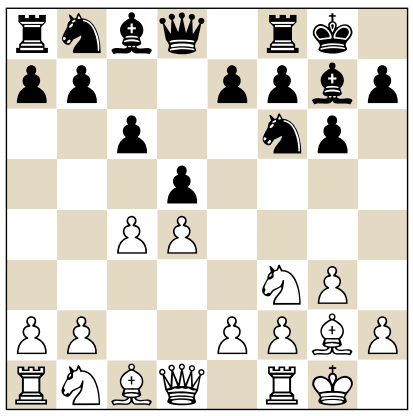
Ding Liren qualified for the Candidates tournament as finalist in the Tbilisi World Cup. In the semi-final he eliminated Wesley So in the rapid tie-breaks with the following fine effort.

Wesley So
Ding Liren
Tbilisi 2017 (6.5)
Grünfeld Indian, Fianchetto Variation

Notes by ***Ding Liren***

This was the third rapid game of the tie-breaks. I got a very large advantage in the first one with the black pieces, but I spoiled it. After the game I realized I could have won in many ways and felt very upset. In the second game I was surprised in the opening, which got me in a bad mood, and playing White I offered a draw on move 9. That's why we had a long break before this game: about an hour.

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.d4 ♘f6 5.c4 c6 6.0-0 0-0



I have played this type of positions many times before, with both colours.

7.♘bd2 This was new to me, but I played a normal idea to challenge his queenside.

7...a5 8.b3 a4 All played 'by hand', within less than 10 seconds.

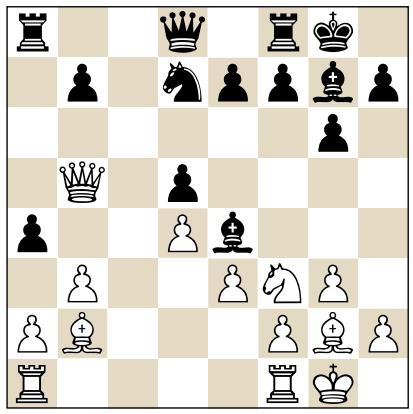
9.♗b2 ♗f5 10.e3 ♘bd7 11.♕e2 Up to here we both blitzed out our moves.

11...♘e4 A natural move to exchange some pieces.

12.♘xe4 ♗xe4 13.cxd5 Using the fact that I haven't played ...e6 yet.

In case of 13.♖fd1 Black goes 13...e6 14.♗f1 ♗xf3 (or even 14...g5).

13...cxd5 14.♕b5



An annoying move, attacking the

pawn on b7. I couldn't find a proper way to defend it, but when I saw the possibility of 14...♖a5 I got excited.

14...♖a5 15.♕xb7

After some thought he accepted the pawn sacrifice.

15...♘c5 16.♕b4

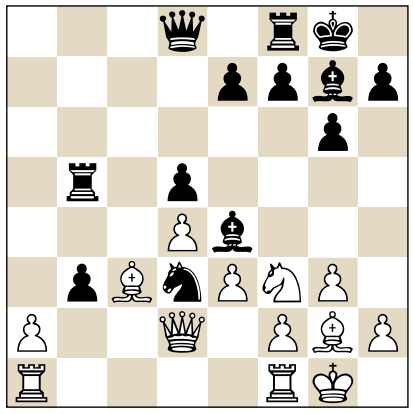
A solid move. After 16.dxc5 ♗xb2 17.b4 ♖a8, 18.♘d4! is a good move (I had only looked at 18.♖ad1 ♖b8 and I regain the pawn on b4), but Black can still keep the balance with 18...♖b8 19.♕a6 ♗xd4 20.exd4 ♖xb4 21.♖fd1 e6.

16...♘d3 17.♕d2 ♖b5

Trying to keep my options open. This is slightly inaccurate, but it is this move that makes the game interesting.

Objectively better was taking on b3 first: 17...axb3 18.axb3 ♖b5 19.♗a3 (19.♖a3 ♕b6) 19...♖xb3, and this should be equal.

18.♗c3 axb3



19.♘g5 A good move. He doesn't take the pawn, as I expected, but immediately tries to exploit the vulnerable position of my knight on d3.

Besides the text-move, he also had another possibility: 19.a4. I didn't consider this move during the game, but after analysing it I concluded that it is better for White: 19...♖b7 20.♘g5 ♗f5 21.e4 (if 21.g4 ♗xg4 22.♕xd3 e5, and the knight on g5 is hanging) 21...dxe4 22.♗xe4. Now my knight is in trouble and Black has to find an amazing idea: 22...b2 23.♖ab1 ♖b3! (it's too hard to find this during the game, when you have 10 minutes and 10 seconds per move) 24.♗xf5 gxf5 25.♕xd3 ♕c8, and Black is fine.

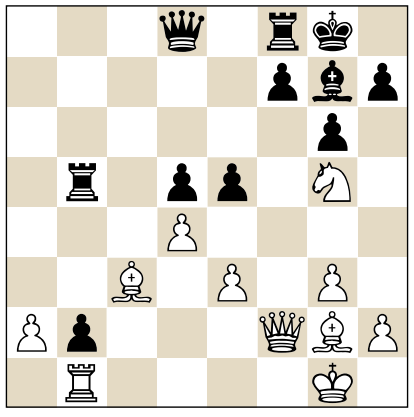
19...b2 20.♖ab1 ♘xf2

Fortunately I had this resource.

21.♕xf2

He can also take the other way: 21.♔xf2 ♗xb1 22.♖xb1 e6 23.♘f3 ♕a8 24.♖xb2 ♖xb2 25.♕xb2 ♖b8 26.♕c2 ♕a3, and he cannot protect the pawn on a2, and the position is close to equal.

21...♗xb1 22.♖xb1 e5



This and my previous three moves I played without thinking, putting him under pressure, also because I was ahead on the clock.

23.♘h3 Accompanied by a draw offer, which I immediately declined, since I had seen my next two moves.

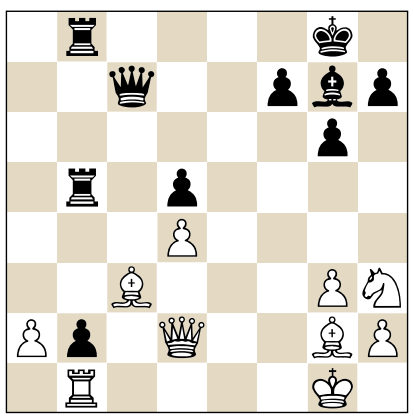
I thought he would play the more natural 23.♘f3 e4 24.♗f1! ♖b7 25.♘e1 ♕a8 26.♖xb2 ♖fb8! 27.♖xb7 ♖xb7 28.♘g2, and he cannot keep the pawn after 28...♖a7, and Black should be better in the long run.

23...exd4 24.exd4 ♕c7 25.♕d2

Not, of course, 25.♖xb2?, since this loses the queen: 25...♕xc3 26.♖xb5 ♗xd4.

25...♖fb8 This allows him a good move, which fortunately he missed.

The best move was 25...♕c4, when after 26.♗f1 ♕xa2 27.♖xb2 ♖xb2 28.♕xb2 ♕xb2 29.♗xb2 ♖b8 the pawn on d4 will fall and Black is slightly better.



26.♘f4 It looks so natural to play the knight here, but it's not the best move. Better was first 26.♗f1, attacking the rook while at the same time protecting the important c4-square. Now the best move is 26...♖c5 27.dxc5 ♕xc5+ 28.♔g2 ♗xc3 29.♕c2 ♕a3 30.♗d3 ♗d4 31.♘f4 ♕xa2 32.♕e2 ♕a8, when I have three pawns for the bishop, but his position is very solid.

26...♕c4 27.♗xd5 ♖xd5 28.♘xd5 ♕xd5 29.♖xb2

Here I didn't know if I was better or not, but after my next move I didn't see any danger for me, as my pieces are so well placed.

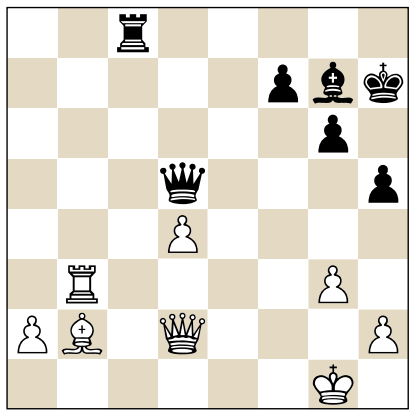
29...♖c8 From here on in, he started losing his grip on the position.

30.♖b3 He should protect his king and play 30.♕d3 h5 (I cannot play 30...♖xc3 because of the intermediate 31.♖b8+) 31.♖f2, and his king is much safer than in the game.

30...h5 31.♗b2 ♔h7

Played without much thought, just like the previous move.

31...h4 32.gxh4 ♕f5 was also fine, but there was no need to calculate such concrete lines.

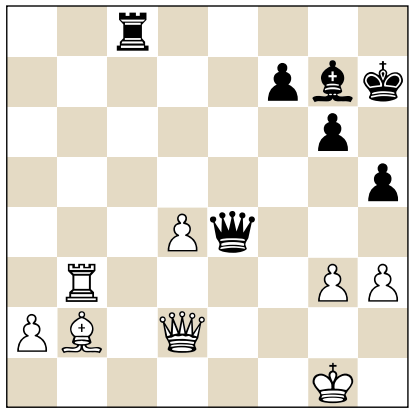


32.h3 Here I realized that he was very nervous about his position. He should have brought his pieces closer to the king: 32.♕f2 ♕e4 33.♖e3 ♕b1+ 34.♔g2 ♕xa2 (34...♖c2 doesn't work because of 35.♖e2) 35.♖e2, with good drawing chances.

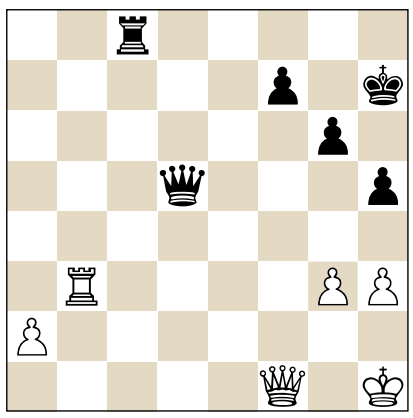
32...♕e4

Bringing the queen into the attack.

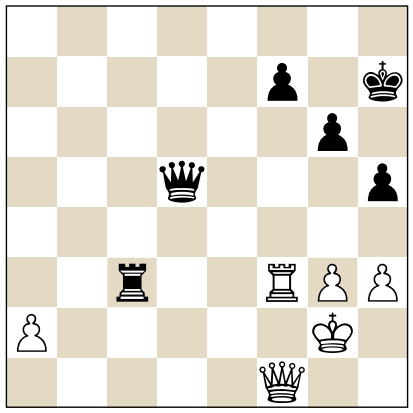
But maybe 32...♕f5 was better, attacking the pawn on h3 and preparing ...♖c2: 33.♖c3 ♖d8, and the pawn on h3 will fall.



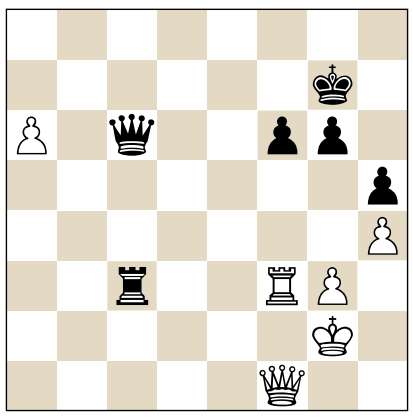
33.♕d3??
This is a blunder. He should have played 33.♖e3 ♕b1+ 34.♖e1 ♕xa2 35.♕f2, and still it's very hard for Black to win.
33...♕e1+
This move is OK, but I had a good chance to finish the game right away, which I missed: 33...♗xd4+! 34.♗xd4 (34.♕xd4 ♖c1+) 34...♖c1+ 35.♔f2 ♖c2+ 36.♕xc2 ♕xc2+, and this should be winning.
34.♕f1 The only move. 34.♔g2 runs into 34...♖e8.
34...♕d2 35.♕f2 ♕d1+ 36.♕f1 ♗xd4+ 37.♗xd4 ♕xd4+ 38.♔h1 ♕d5+
I had calculated up to here when I played 33...♕e1+ and I believed I had some chances to win.



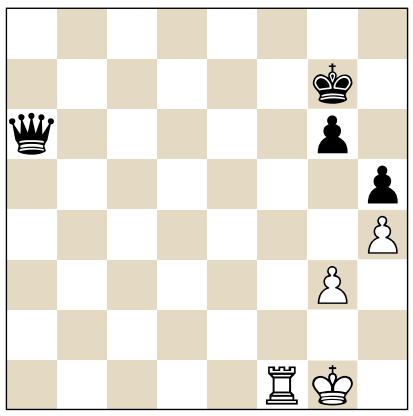
39.♖f3
Another bad move, which makes my task much easier. He should have played 39.♔g1 ♖c2 40.♖e3 ♕xa2, although it turns out that this is also winning for Black: 41.h4 (41.♖f3 ♕a7+) 41...♖b2 42.♖e1 ♕a7+ 43.♔h1 ♕b7+ 44.♔g1 ♕b6+ 45.♔h1 ♕c6+ 46.♔g1 ♕c5+ 47.♔h1 ♕d5+ 48.♔g1 ♕d4+ 49.♔h1 ♖f2, winning.
39...♖c3 40.♔g2



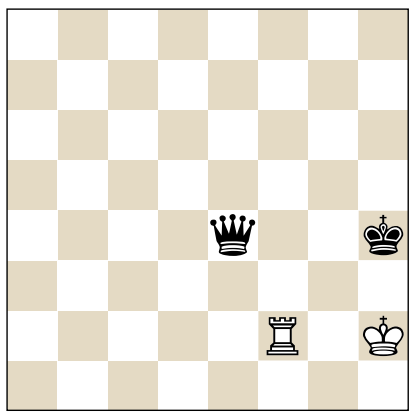
40...♕c6 Maybe he had missed this move. Now I can win his queen. But I want to keep things simple, making sure that I keep my f7-pawn.
41.h4 ♔g8 41...f5 would be bad, since it would block the queen's access to h3 if it goes to c8 after ...♖c2+.
42.a4 f6 43.a5 ♔g7 But here I realized that after 43...♖c2+ 44.♔g1 ♖c1 45.♖xf6 the pawn still falls.
44.a6



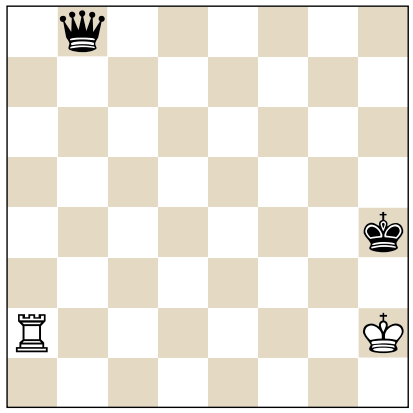
44...♖c2+
Another way to win was 44...g5, but it looked scary. And I didn't have much time. So I finally decided to give up the f-pawn, because I saw that the position after winning the queen was winning anyway.
45.♔g1 ♖c1 46.♖xf6 ♖xf1+ 47.♖xf1 ♕xa6



48.♔g2 More stubborn was 48.♖f4 ♕e2 49.♔h1 g5 50.hxg5 h4 51.♖xh4 (51.gxh4 ♔g6 and the king will go to h5) 51...♕f2 (now the pawn will fall and there is no stalemate) 52.g6 ♕xg3 53.♖h7+ ♔f6 54.♖f7+ ♔e6, winning.
48...♕e2+ 49.♖f2 ♕e4+ 50.♔h2 g5 Now it's easy.
51.hxg5 h4
There is no fortress.
52.♖f4 ♕e2+ 53.♔h3 hxg3 54.♔xg3 ♔g6 55.♖f2 ♕e3+ 56.♔g2 ♔xg5 57.♖f3 ♕e2+ 58.♔g3 ♕e1+ 59.♔g2 ♔g4 60.♖f2 ♕e4+ 61.♔h2 ♔h4



62.♖a2 After 62.♖g2, 62...♕e5+ is the easiest (not 62...♕f4+ 63.♔g1 ♔h3 64.♖e2, and it's no longer easy) 63.♔g1 ♔h3, and wins.
62...♕e5+ 63.♔g1 ♕d4+ 64.♔h2 ♕d6+ 65.♔g1 ♕c5+ 66.♔h2 ♕c7+ 67.♔g1 ♕b6+ 68.♔g2 ♕b7+ 69.♔h2 ♕b8+



Now his rook will fall and in view of 70.♔g2 (or 70.♔h1 ♕b1+) 70...♕g8+. White resigned.
My most important win in this tournament. I was so happy afterwards, having qualified for the Candidates tournament. ■

Alexander Grischuk

Russia – Age 34 – World ranking: 12 – Rating: 2767

Alexander Grischuk is one of the deepest players on the circuit. His opening preparation is impressive and original, his play is profound and his understanding outstanding. His time management (or mismanagement?!) is well known, but as it stems from Alexander's philosophy and vision of the game rather than anything else (e.g. ignorance), he will not attempt to do anything to modify or 'improve' it. I, for one, believe that with all the pluses that his approach brings, one cannot win a tournament as tight as this one going through 14 time-troubles. On the other hand, I would not mind to be proven wrong.

Strength: original opening preparation

Weakness: time management

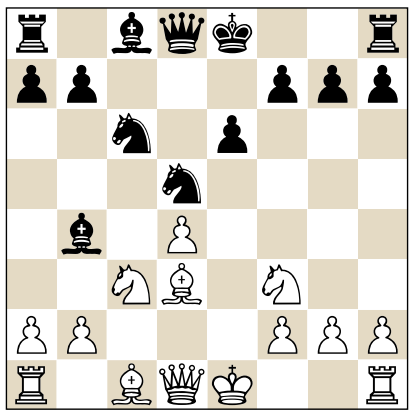
Alexander Grischuk qualified for the Candidates tournament in the 2017 FIDE Grand Prix. In the first GP in Sharjah he won a key victory against co-winner Shakhriyar Mamedyarov.

Alexander Grischuk
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Sharjah 2017
Queen's Gambit Declined, Semi-Tarrasch

Notes by Alexander Grischuk

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 c5 5.e3 ♘c6 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♗d3 cxd4 8.exd4 ♗b4?!

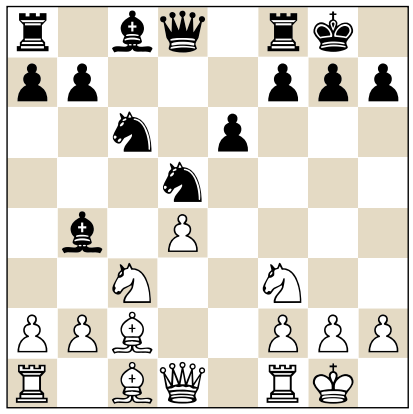
This is normally played without the inclusion of the moves ...♘c6 and ♗d3. In the given situation ...♗b4 is a serious inaccuracy.



9.0-0! 0-0?!

Black should probably have decided on 9...♗xc3 10.bxc3 ♘xc3, although here even 11.♕c2 ♘d5 12.♗xh7!? is interesting, when it is bad to play 12...g6? 13.♗xg6 fxg6 14.♕xg6+ ♔d7 15.♕g7+ ♘de7 16.d5 exd5 17.♘e5+ ♘xe5 18.♕xe5.

10.♗c2!



It is evident that the outcome of the opening is clearly advantageous to White. The bishop on b4 is obviously badly placed.

10...♗d7 11.a3 ♗xc3

11...♗e7 12.♕d3 g6 13.♗h6 ♖e8 14.♘e4 also holds little cheer.

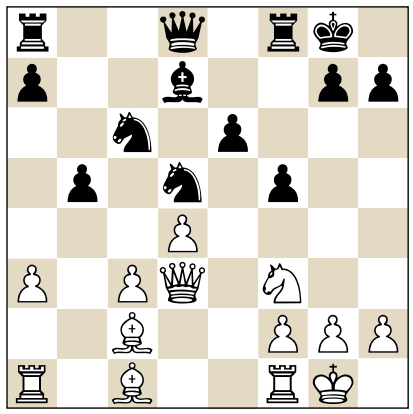
12.♕d3

On 12.bxc3, Black continues 12...b5.

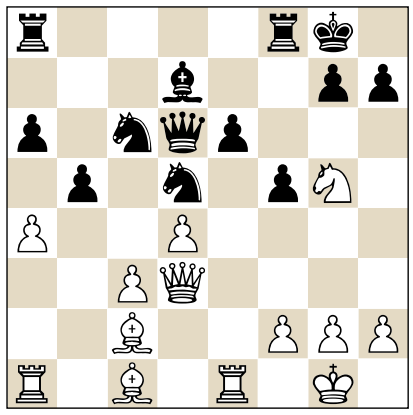
12...f5 13.bxc3 b5

Creating something like a defence, but now Black's position resembles a

house of cards – blow on it, and it will collapse. However, I was unable to blow on it in the right way.



14.a4 a6 15.♖e1 ♕c7 16.♘g5 ♕d6

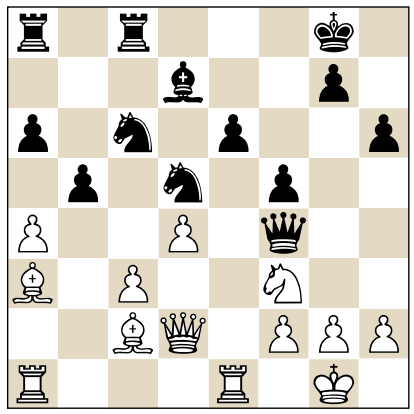


17.♕d2?

A move which is not so much bad, but idiotic. If 17.♗a3, I did not like 17...b4 18.cxb4 ♘f4 (18...♘cxb4 19.♕d2 a5 20.♗b3 h6 21.♘f3 ♖fc8 22.♘e5 ♔h7 is better, with an extremely unpleasant, but not hopeless position), but after 19.♕g3 ♘xd4 20.♗d1 Black can resign – he has no defence against 21.b5. But whereas this is at least understandable – in such a position one does not want to allow the opponent the possibility of playing his knight to f4 – how could I forget why in fact I had induced the queen to go to d6? This was quite inexplicable.

Of course, I should have played 17.♗b3! h6 18.♘f3, and since 18...♘a5 19.♗a3 is not possible (it was for this that the queen was lured to d6; with the queen on c7 it was always possible to answer ♗b3 with ...♘a5), it is hard to offer Black any good advice.

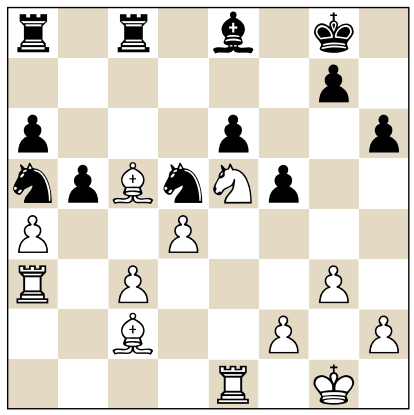
17...h6 18.♘f3 ♖fc8! 19.♗a3 ♕f4!



20.♕xf4?

I avoided 20.♕d3 because of 20...♘xc3!? (otherwise things are altogether dismal for Black), and in the given instance it is indeed not immediately obvious that after 21.axb5! (21.♕xc3 b4 22.♗xb4 ♘xb4 23.♕xb4 ♖xc2 and Black is fine) 21...♘xb5 22.♗c5 for the pawn White has not merely 'more than sufficient', but simply overwhelming compensation.

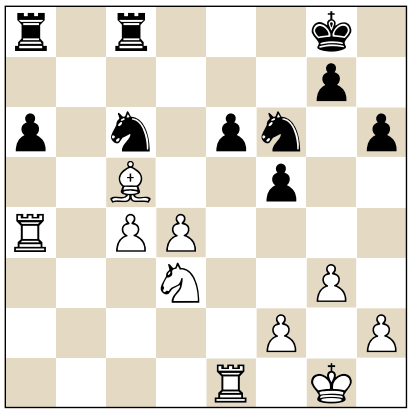
20...♘xf4 21.♗c5 ♘a5 22.♘e5 ♗e8 23.g3 ♘d5 24.♖a3



24...bxa4! 25.c4 ♘f6 26.♗xa4 ♗xa4 27.♖xa4 ♘c6 28.♘d3

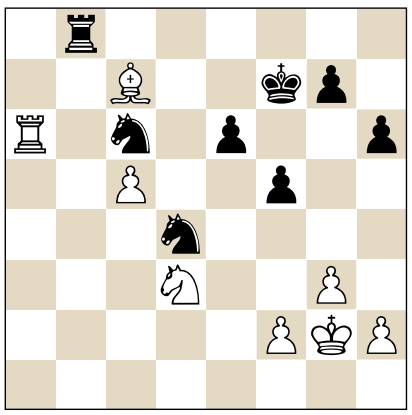
The preceding stage of the game (after the opening) was played excellently by Shakhriyar, but now he begins to go wrong. Any of the continuations indicated on this and the following moves would have led to a draw.

'How could I forget why in fact I had induced the queen to go to d6? This was quite inexplicable.'



28...♘e4 28...♖d8!?. **29.♗b6 ♖cb8** 29...a5!. **30.c5 ♔f7?** 30...a5!. **31.♖ea1** Now Black again faces an unpleasant defence.

31...♘c3 32.♖xa6 ♖xa6 33.♖xa6 ♘e2+ 34.♔g2 ♘exd4 35.♗c7



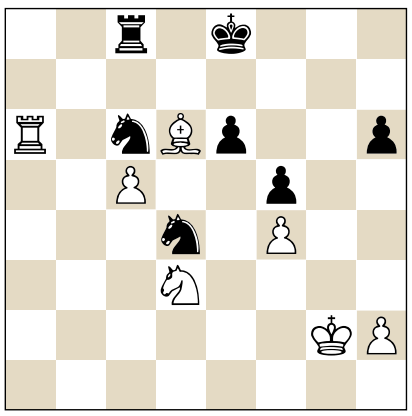
35...♖c8

Forced, in order after 36.♘e5 ♘xe5 37.♗xe5 to have 37...♘c6.

36.♗d6 g5! 37.f4 gxf4

Also in the event of 37...g4 38.♔f2 Black still has to suffer.

38.gxf4 ♔e8



39.♖b6!

39.♔f2 ♔d7 40.♔e3 ♘c2+ 41.♔d2 ♘2d4 is fruitless, since the king cannot

Alexander Grischuk and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov both appeared in a good mood after the Russian had won their key encounter.

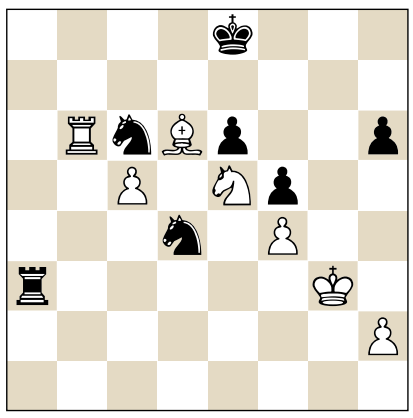
MARIA EMELIANOVA

advance any further. But now 40.♖b7 is threatened.

39...♖a8!?

39...♘a5!! 40.♘e5 ♘dc6! is more accurate, but how realistic is it to find this in time-trouble? Especially since after 41.♘xc6 ♖xc6 42.♖b4 ♔d7 43.♔g3 ♖c8 44.♔h4 Black still has to find a way to draw.

40.♘e5 ♖a2+ 41.♔g3 ♖a3+



42.♔g2

Black's defence is based on several tactical nuances. The first: 42.♔f2 ♖a2+ 43.♔e3 (the second: 43.♔e1 ♘xe5 44.♗xe5 ♘f3+!) 43...♖a3+ 44.♔d2 ♘xe5 45.♗xe5 ♘b3+!.

42...♖a2+ 43.♔g3 ♖a3+ 44.♔h4 ♘xe5 45.♗xe5 ♘f3+ 46.♔h5 ♘xe5 47.fxe5

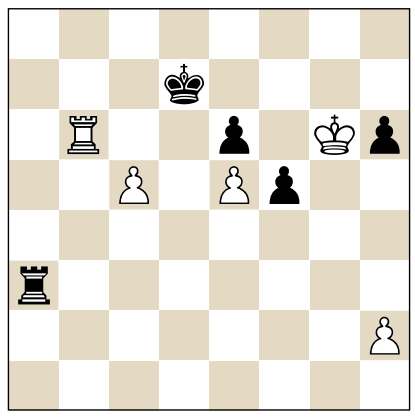
The third: 47.♖xe6+ ♔f7 48.♖xe5 ♖h3 mate!

47...♔d7

Black loses after 47...♖c3 48.♔g6 (but not 48.♖xe6+? ♔f7 49.♖f6+ ♔g7 50.c6?? ♖h3 mate).

48.♔g6

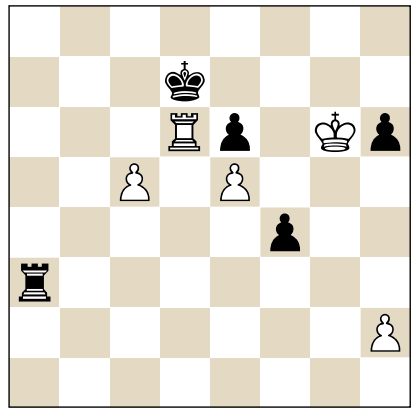
Clearly better than 48.♖d6+ ♔e7 49.c6 ♖e3 50.♖d7+ ♔e8.



48...f4?!

During the game I did not see a win after 48...♖e3 49.♔f6 f4. The reason is rather banal – there isn't one! For example: 50.♖d6+ ♔c7 51.♔xe6 f3 52.♔d5 ♖d3+ 53.♔e4 f2 54.♖f6 ♖d2 55.♔e3 ♖d5. However, the move in the game also does not yet lose.

49.♖d6+



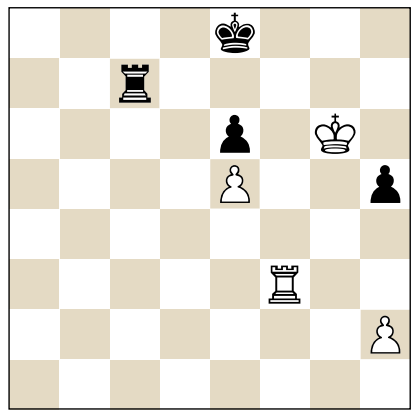
49...♔e7?

The only saving line was 49...♔c7! 50.♖xe6 ♖e3!!, when there is no win: 51.♔xh6 (51.♔f5 is met by 51...f3 52.♖f6 f2 53.♔e6 ♖e2) 51...♔d7 52.♖f6 ♖xe5 53.c6+ ♔e7 54.♖xf4 ♖c5. With the move played Black retains material equality, but loses the game.

50.c6 f3

50...♖c3 51.♖d7+ ♔e8 52.♖f7 ♖xc6 53.♖xf4 was also hopeless. Each side has only two pawns, but Black's pieces are so badly placed that he is lost.

51.♖d7+ ♔e8 52.♖f7 ♖c3 53.c7 h5 54.♖xf3 ♖xc7



55.♖h3!

The last precise move.

55...♔d7 56.♖xh5 ♖c4 57.♖h7+ ♔c6 58.♔f6 ♔d5 59.♖d7+ ♔e4 60.♖d1

Black resigned. ■

Sergey Karjakin

Russia – Age 28 – World ranking: 13 – Rating: 2763

Sergey Karjakin is one of few players who have continuously done much better in the World Championship cycle if you compare their achievements there to their overall results. I do understand that the Crimea-born phenomenon is able to concentrate especially well for these important events, channelling all his energy and efforts to focus on them, yet I do not believe that such an approach can work twice. He had played badly throughout the tournaments he competed in during the previous cycle and almost became World Champion. I simply don't think this can happen again. At the end of the day, Sergey himself must see after all the tournaments he played last year that the level he shows is not as high as that of his competitors, and this must slowly but surely have affected his confidence. But then again, confidence is something he doesn't have to borrow and he will be determined to do it again. If not for himself, then for Mother Russia.

Strength: spirit

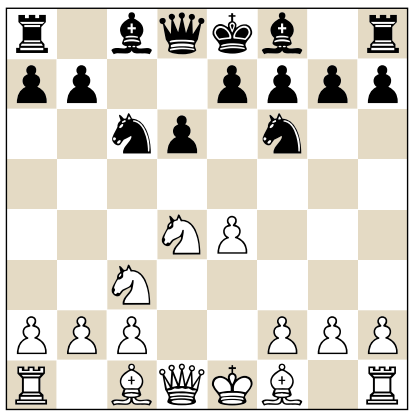
Weakness: memory

Sergey Karjakin was the winner of the previous Candidates tournament, in Moscow two years ago. In the final round he got the Russian fans in raptures when he defeated Fabiano Caruana with a flashy tactical finish.

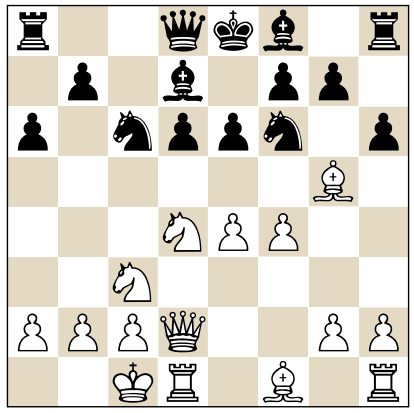
Sergey Karjakin
Fabiano Caruana
Moscow 2016 (14)
Siciian Defence
Richter/Rauzer Variation

Notes by ***Sergey Karjakin***

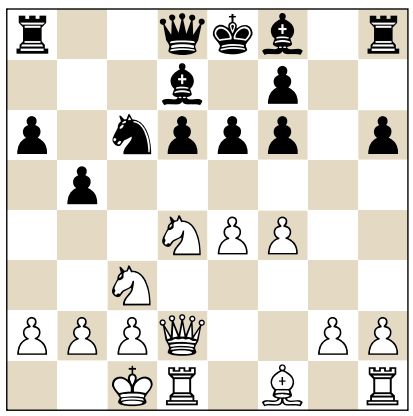
In this last round I simply wanted to concentrate on my game and play well.
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6



Fabiano pins his hopes on the complicated Rauzer Variation, which is currently not so popular.
6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♗d7 9.f4 h6



Black has very many different options, and, as it later transpired, a great supporter of this move order is the Chinese player Li Chao. (At the press conference Fabiano Caruana revealed that by way of preparation he had played through Li Chao's games with the Rauzer – ed.)
10.♗h4 b5
Here 10...♘xe4 is too provocative for such a game, because of 11.♕e1 ♘f6 12.♘f5!.
11.♗xf6 gxf6



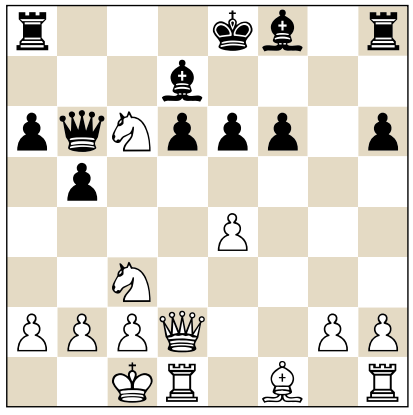
12.f5

The idea of weakening the light squares around the black king seemed very tempting to me. Especially since, compared with variations with the pawn on h7, there is no longer the important bishop manoeuvre ...f8-h6-f4.

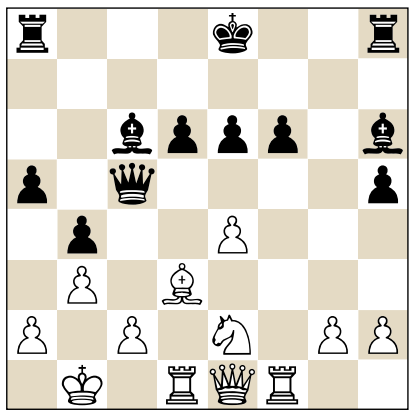
12...♕b6 13.fxe6

In view of Black's subsequent reaction, it would have been more accurate to play 13.♘xc6 ♕xc6 14.♗d3, retaining additional options.

13...fxe6 14.♘xc6



14...♕xc6! An interesting decision, by which Black defends his weaknesses in advance. It looks not so convincing for Black to play the similar 14...♗xc6 15.♗d3 h5 16.♔b1 b4 17.♘e2 ♕c5 18.♖hf1 ♗h6 19.♕e1 a5 20.b3,



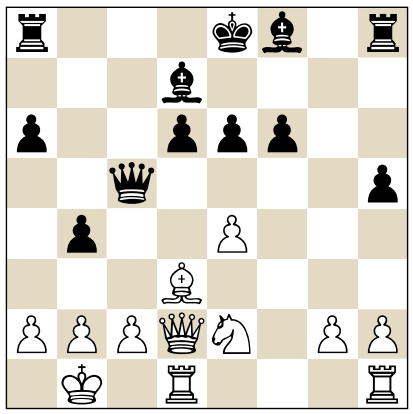
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

when he will have to spend time on defence.

15.♗d3 h5 16.♔b1 b4

16...♗h6 is inaccurate, as after 17.♕f2 White arranges his pieces more successfully.

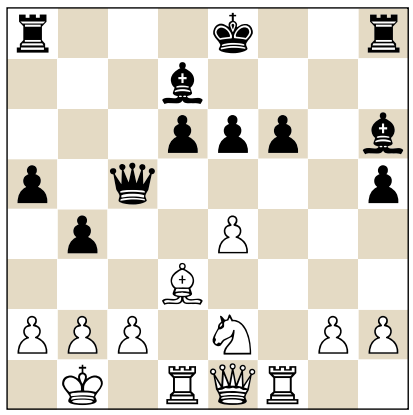
17.♘e2 ♕c5



18.♖hf1

The typical central blow 18.e5! was stronger, when after the fairly forced 18...fxe5 19.♕g5 ♗e7 20.♕g7 ♖f8 21.♖hf1 ♖xf1 22.♖xf1 ♗c6 23.♖f7 d5 24.♗g6 ♔d8 25.♕xe5 ♗e8 26.♖g7 ♕f2 27.a3! (27.♕xh5 ♗xg6 28.♖xg6 ♔d7 is not so clear) 27...♕f6 28.♕d4!? ♕xd4 29.♘xd4 ♔d7 30.axb4 ♗xg6 31.♖xg6 e5 32.♘f3 e4 33.♘e5+ ♔c7 34.c3 an endgame with an advantage for White is reached. But that would have been a different story...

18...♗h6 19.♕e1 a5



20.b3!

I like this move, after which the bishop is guaranteed a more worthy place.

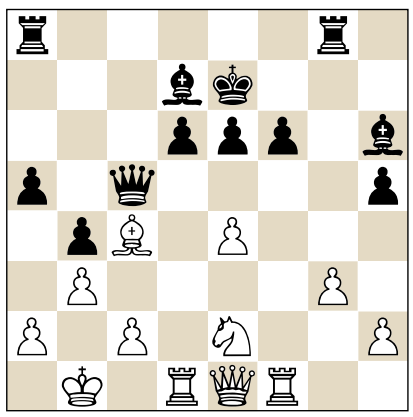
20...♖g8

No benefit is achieved from the

Immediately after he had earned the right to play for the World Championship in the last round of the 2016 Moscow Candidates, Sergey Karjakin was engulfed by journalists.

opening of the file after 20...a4 21.♗c4 axb3 22.♗xb3, when the white king feels quite secure.

21.g3 ♔e7 22.♗c4



22...♗e3 Expressing it in ice-hockey terms – 'skilfully knocking the puck into the offensive zone!'

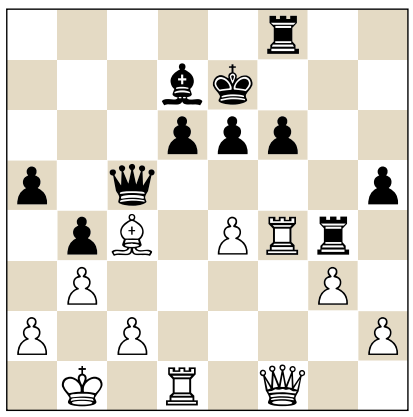
There were not so many active ideas after 22...♖g4 23.♘d4 a4 24.♖f3, when White has everything under control.

23.♖f3 23.♘f4 undoubtedly deserved consideration, when more concrete play arises.

23...♖g4 24.♕f1 ♖f8 25.♘f4 ♗xf4

It was dangerous for Black to try to retain the bishop after 25...♗d4 26.♖fd3 ♗e5 27.♘xh5.

26.♖xf4



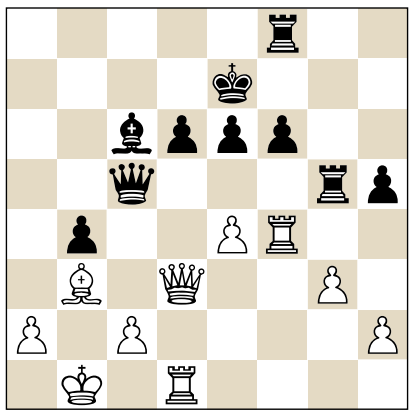
26...a4 As Fabiano rightly mentioned after the game, it was better to maintain the tension by 26...♗c6 27.♕d3 and now the interesting 27...♖f7!?, not allowing any immediate activity.

27.bxa4 ♗xa4 28.♕d3

The idea of the pawn sacrifice is now in the air.

28.♗b3 ♗xb3 29.axb3 was premature, as after 29...♖gg8 Black has the initiative.

28...♗c6 29.♗b3 ♖g5

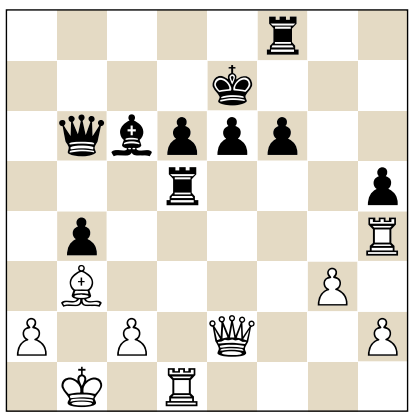


30.e5! There were no real threats by Black to strengthen his position, but I now wanted to clarify the situation.

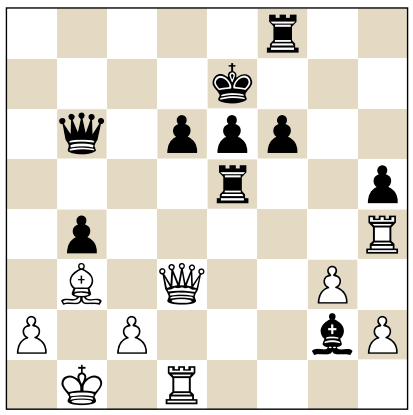
30...♖xe5 31.♖c4

31.♕h7+ ♖f7 32.♕h8 was also interesting, with dynamic equality.

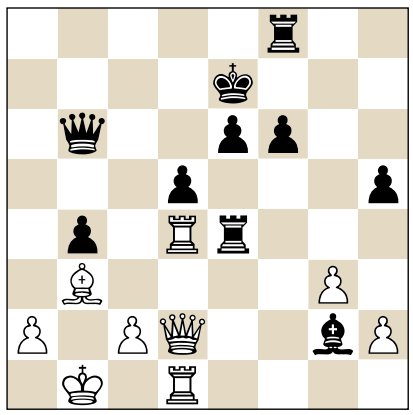
31...♖d5 32.♕e2 ♕b6 33.♖h4



33...♖e5 An interesting possibility was pointed out after the game by Ian Nepomniachtchi: 33...♖xd1+ 34.♕xd1 ♕e3, which after 35.♖xb4 ♗e4 36.a3 would have led to a complicated position. **34.♕d3 ♗g2** After 34...d5 35.♕h7+ ♖f7 36.♕h8 it is difficult for Black to coordinate his pieces.

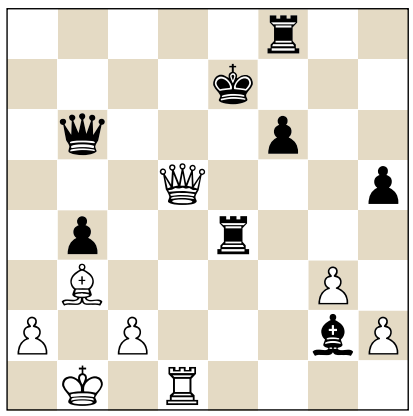


35.♖d4! Good centralization. **35...d5 36.♕d2 ♖e4?** I was expecting the variation 36...♗e4 37.♖xb4 ♕c6 38.♔b2 with approximate equality.



37.♖xd5! This decisive move came to mind quite quickly, but there was too much at stake to make it without checking the variations.

37...exd5 38.♕xd5

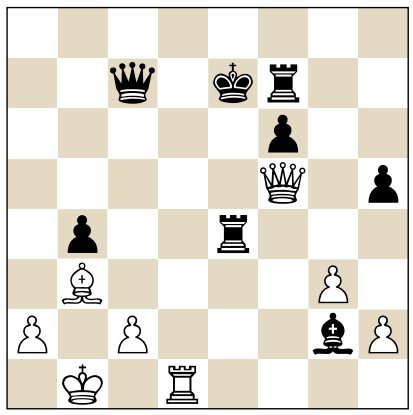


The lack of harmony in Black's ranks prevents him from defending his isolated king.

38...♕c7

The most resilient defence was 38...♖d4 39.♕xd4 ♕xd4 40.♖xd4 ♖b8, in the success of which it is hard to believe.

39.♕f5! ♖f7 Here Fabiano offered me a draw. Let us put this down to nervous tension and the excessively high stakes...



40.♗xf7 ♕e5 41.♖d7+ ♔f8 42.♖d8+

Black resigned. ■

London 2013

				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1 Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2872	* *	½ ½	1 0	½ ½	1 1	1 ½	½ 0	½ 1	8½	2854
2 Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2810	½ ½	* *	½ 1	½ 1	½ ½	½ 1	½ 0	½ 1	8½	2863
3 Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2747	0 1	½ 0	* *	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	1 ½	8	2842
4 Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2809	½ ½	½ 0	½ 0	* *	1 0	½ ½	1 1	1 1	8	2833
5 Boris Gelfand	IGM	ISR	2740	0 0	½ ½	½ ½	0 1	* *	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	6½	2764
6 Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2764	0 ½	½ 0	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	* *	½ 1	½ ½	6½	2761
7 Vassily Ivanchuk	IGM	UKR	2757	½ 1	½ 1	½ 0	0 0	½ ½	½ 0	* *	0 1	6	2741
8 Teimour Radjabov	IGM	AZE	2793	½ 0	½ 0	0 ½	0 0	½ 0	½ ½	1 0	* *	4	2628

Khanty-Mansiysk 2014

				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1 Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2770	* *	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	½ ½	1 ½	½ ½	½ 1	8½	2843
2 Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2766	½ ½	* *	0 1	½ ½	½ ½	0 1	½ 1	½ ½	7½	2800
3 Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2787	½ ½	1 0	* *	1 ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ 0	0 1	7	2768
4 Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	AZE	2757	0 ½	½ ½	0 ½	* *	1 ½	0 1	1 ½	½ ½	7	2772
5 Dmitry Andreikin	IGM	RUS	2709	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	* *	½ 1	0 ½	1 ½	7	2779
6 Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2830	0 ½	1 0	½ ½	1 0	½ 0	* *	1 ½	½ ½	6½	2733
7 Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2758	½ ½	½ 0	½ 1	0 ½	1 ½	0 ½	* *	1 0	6½	2743
8 Veselin Topalov	IGM	BUL	2785	½ 0	½ ½	1 0	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	0 1	* *	6	2718

Moscow 2016

				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		TPR
1 Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2760	* *	½ 1	1 0	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	1 ½	½ 1	8½	2854
2 Fabiano Caruana	IGM	USA	2794	½ 0	* *	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ 1	½ ½	7½	2801
3 Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2762	0 1	½ 0	* *	1 ½	½ 1	½ ½	½ 0	1 ½	7½	2806
4 Peter Svidler	IGM	RUS	2757	½ ½	½ ½	0 ½	* *	½ 1	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	7	2781
5 Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2786	½ ½	½ ½	½ 0	½ 0	* *	½ ½	1 ½	1 ½	7	2777
6 Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2793	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	½ ½	* *	½ ½	½ ½	7	2776
7 Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2790	0 ½	½ 0	½ 1	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	* *	1 1	7	2776
8 Veselin Topalov	IGM	BUL	2780	½ 0	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	0 ½	½ ½	0 0	* *	4½	2648

Berlin 2018

				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	TPR
1 Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	AZE	2809	* *								
2 Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2800		* *							
3 Wesley So	IGM	USA	2799			* *						
4 Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2794				* *					
5 Fabiano Caruana	IGM	USA	2784					* *				
6 Ding Liren	IGM	CHN	2769						* *			
7 Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2767							* *		
8 Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2763								* *	

Download the New In Chess app:

- get early access to every issue
- follow every move on the built-in board

NEW IN CHESS
READ BY CLUB PLAYERS IN 116 COUNTRIES
Levon Aronian wins on the Rock
Garry Kasparov's Desert Island Discs
Judit Polgar How to recover from a loss (and a win)
Nigel Short Correspondence chess serves no purpose
Interview: Vidit Gujrathi India's rising star
Jan Timman The relevance of studies
Opening Surprise 2...h5 against the English
Maxim Dlugy on Fischer Random The future or just a variant?
Great games with great comments Anand, Giri, Kramnik, Mamedyarov, Karjakin and many more
Magnus Carlsen
Record 6th win in Wijk aan Zee
£15,000 PAYDAY FOR PIA CRAMLING IN GIBRALTAR

Read New In Chess on your tablet or smartphone, two weeks before the printed edition is available, and replay all the moves in the interactive chess viewer

You can now download the digital edition of New In Chess on your tablet or phone and read all the stories immediately after publication. By simply tapping on the games you can replay the moves on the interactive chessviewer. So from now on you don't need a board and set to fully enjoy what top grandmasters have to say about their games! The New In Chess app installs in seconds, has all the right features and is easy to operate. We have made an entire issue available as a FREE DOWNLOAD on your iPhone, iPad or Android device.

Get it on Google play

The chess magazine that moves

Now available on iPhone, iPad and Android

Available on the App Store